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THE **HILL TIMES**

Exclusive opinion: inside

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**NEWS**

Trump's tariffs could require pandemic-style public service mobilization, say observers

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

With U.S. President Donald Trump's threatened tariffs on ice until early next month, Canadian federal public servants find themselves preparing and implementing countermeasures while also anticipating a change in this country's political leadership and a potential election.

"We're putting ourselves potentially smack dab into a caretaker period if the government loses the confidence of the House, or if the new Liberal leader decides they want to go to the polls right away because that's best for them," said Lori Turnbull, professor and chair of Dalhousie University's Public and International Affairs Department.

"We could be looking at a government that is negotiating with Trump in caretaker mode, and the public service, I think, will have a lot of questions about how to manage that and where the mandate comes from."

Trump initially said he would impose tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports on his first day in office, Jan. 20, unless both countries took unquantified action on illegal immigration and drug smuggling at their respective borders with the U.S.

When Jan. 20 came, Trump mused that the tariffs would be coming on Feb. 1. By the time that day arrived, Trump announced that a 25-per-cent tariff would be imposed on all Canadian goods—



John Hannaford

**COMMENT**

**We can no longer trust America**



Out of the blue, U.S. President Donald Trump launched a savage economic attack on both of his reliable allies and his biggest trading partners, writes Michael Harris. Photograph courtesy of Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons

Canada can never again assume that America is our devoted friend who will look out for our interests or appreciate our friendship. It's time to strengthen our country from within, and reach out to countries who, like us, can no longer count on a world order run by America.

BY MICHAEL HARRIS

HALIFAX—Henry Kissinger once reportedly quipped that, "It may be dangerous to be America's enemy; but to be America's friend is fatal."

South Vietnam was a friend, and now it no longer exists.

The previous government of Afghanistan was a friend, but has been replaced by the Taliban.

The Shah of Iran was a friend, until he was overthrown in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. He died in exile.

**NEWS**

'Canadians are meeting the moment of the existential threat to our identity,' says Furey as premiers head to Washington this week

BY CHRISTOPHER GULY

When the man whose brand was built on "the art of the deal" slapped Canada with sweeping tariffs on Feb. 1, he inadvertently crafted a consolidated reply from the Confederation.

U.S. President Donald Trump has become the domestic unifier of Canadians, crossing partisan and geographic lines in a unique historical way at an unprecedented fractious time in the country's relationship with its southern neighbour.

A clarion call to "buy Canadian," look for "Made in Canada" labels on products, and avoid vacationing in the U.S. swept social media following the announcement of American tariffs on Canadian imports. Those 25-per-cent-tariffs are currently paused until early March, following discussions between Trump and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) on Feb. 3.

Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Premier Andrew Furey characterized Trump's "51st state" pitch for Canada as "incredibly insulting," and an "assault on our democratic institutions and our sovereignty."

"But even beyond our sovereignty, Canadians are meeting the moment of the existential threat

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# Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

## Martinez Ferrada won't run again federally, sets her sights on Montreal mayoralty race



Now former tourism minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada announced on Feb. 6 she won't re-offer federally as she wants to run for mayor of Montreal later this year. Screenshots courtesy of X

Now former tourism minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada made two announcements last week: 1. she's not running again in the next federal election because 2. she's running to be mayor of Montreal.

In a video posted on X on Feb. 6, the two-term MP for Hochelaga said: "In the last few weeks, a lot of you have reached out for me to get involved in a new way, as mayor of Montreal.

"That is why I have started a conversation with the elected officials and the members of the party Ensemble Montréal, a conversation that will go on until the 6<sup>th</sup> of

April," which is the date that the party will choose its new leader.

Of note, Montreal's municipal government follows a party system. Ensemble Montréal is the official opposition to current mayor Valérie Plante's Projet Montréal party, and Plante announced she's not seeking a third term. That party will choose her successor in March.

"I can already tell you that I will not be seeking re-election in Hochelaga," Martinez Ferrada explains, thanking her constituents for their support.

Hours after her news, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

"thanked Soraya Martinez Ferrada for her dedication and service to Canadians" and announced her portfolios—tourism and Quebec economic development—will now be handled by Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge, who is currently on parental leave. Martinez Ferrada is also leaving her role as Liberal Party national campaign co-chair.

Montrealers won't be going to the polls until Nov. 2. Fun fact: former Liberal cabinet minister Denis Coderre led Ensemble Montreal and the City of Montreal from 2013-2017.

## Jimmy Kimmel mulls Canada joining the U.S.

Regular readers know that lately *Heard on the Hill* has been scouring the American late-night television circuit to see what the hosts have to say about Canadian politics. Last month, it was Mark Carney having a nice chat with *The Daily Show*'s Jon Stewart, then last week it was Chrystia Freeland finding an ally in Bill Maher, the host of *Real Time*. Today, HOH has a two-fer for you, starting with Jimmy Kimmel.

The host of the eponymous *Live* show on ABC was doing a stand-up bit on Feb. 5 dissecting the fallout of Trump's tariff threats when he brought up the president's recurring overtures of Canada becoming America's 51<sup>st</sup> state.



'Save us, Canada,' said ABC host Jimmy Kimmel on his Live show on Feb. 5. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube

"Republicans seem to be rooting for this," said Kimmel. "But let's just imagine for a second that somehow they do make this happen and Canada does become a state. Do they think it would be a red state?" he said, referring to the Republicans' colour of choice.

Kimmel noted that Canada's population is on par with California's, which has 54 electoral votes in the American democratic system. "If Canada also had 54 electoral votes, forget MAGA. Our next president will be a kind-hearted lesbian moose. I am trying to say I am for it. Save us, Canada, you're our only hope."

## Seth Meyers marvels at our polite rage

Meanwhile, Seth Meyers seemed to enjoy what passes for rage in Canadian politics.

On Feb. 5 on his NBC show *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, the comedian aired two clips: the first, of Chrystia Freeland on CNN saying—in her best tired-mom voice—"Guys, just cut it out! Just stop it. This is a terrible idea," noting "how hurt and frankly how furious Canadians are" about Trump's tariff threats.

Then followed by a clip of Trudeau in a press conference saying Canadians are "a little perplexed" by the now-delayed levy and Trump's desire to reduce the prime minister's role to that of a state governor.

"I don't think there's a lot of Americans who wake up in the morning saying 'Agh! Damn Canada! We should really go after Canada,'" said Trudeau.

"I have never seen Canadians so fucking mad," said Meyers, seated

alone at his desk. "I mean, they have blown their fuses," he continued.

"But it's true, no American wakes up saying, 'damn Canada, we should really go after Canada' except for Kendrick Lamar. That dude has it out for Canadian rapper Drake," said Meyers, referring to the rappers' ongoing feud which. Of note, the resulting songs Lamar wrote about the battle won him five Grammy awards on Feb. 2.



'I have never seen Canadians this mad,' NBC host Seth Meyers said on his *Late Night* show on Feb. 5. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube

## Billy Baldwin supports his Canadian cousins

And over in the Twittersphere, American actor Billy Baldwin has come to bat for Canada.

"Buy Canadian!" he posted on Feb. 2, followed by a handful of other tweets ranging from the president—"How much do the pensions of cops, firemen, teachers and ironworkers drop

tomorrow when the stock market takes a dive due to Trump's trade war with Canada, Mexico and China?"—to the funny: "I'm hearing that Canada, for national security purposes, will acquire Alaska



Billy Baldwin. Photograph courtesy of X

from the United States," and, "to assuage concerns about the trade war with Canada... Trump has offered Montana, Hawaii and Alabama, adding Justin Trudeau to Mount Rushmore, Luka Dončić and a player to be named later... if 'Canada keeps the maple syrup flowing.'"

One of the four famous Baldwin brothers—including Alec, Stephen and Daniel—the family has French Canadian roots through their mother Carol. Billy Baldwin is also a hardcore Democrat.

## 'Give us a break': Bob Rae gets frank on Fox News

Meanwhile, Canada's ambassador to the UN Bob Rae was on American TV last week, but the audience wasn't laughing.

On Feb. 3, Rae appeared on Fox News' *Special Report* in which he and host Bret Baier discussed—

you guessed it!—the proposed U.S. tariffs on Canadian imports.

"You say one group says [the trade deficit is] \$60-billion, the president says one day it's \$100-billion, the next day he says it's \$150-billion—come on. Give us a break here," said Rae, in what was his turn to use an exasperated-parent tone.

The former Ontario premier explained to Baier that Canadians "don't want any administration making and taking decisions that are going to make insecurity, uncertainty, and real collapses in the market in a way that is



Canada's envoy to the UN Bob Rae told Fox News on Feb. 3: "By the way, we are not the 51<sup>st</sup> state." Screenshot courtesy of YouTube

quite arbitrary," ending with this salvo: "By the way, we are not the 51<sup>st</sup> state. We are a sovereign, independent country. Our leader deserves to be treated with respect, and we deserve to be treated

with respect, and that's the way we want to proceed."

Americans voiced their reaction on social media. Hudson Institute senior fellow David Asher called Rae "a disgrace" with the follow-up: "President Trump just gave you a very reasonable deal and you spit down his throat in return? It's beyond outrageous." While former acting director of U.S. National Intelligence Richard Grenell mis-titled Rae in his comment: "Yikes. Canada's Ambassador to the United States @BobRae48 is imploding on @FoxNews right now."

## Journal de Montreal's smart front page

Meanwhile, *Le journal de Montréal* came out swinging with a smart front page on Feb. 3, telling readers what the editorial team really thinks about the Donald Trump's behaviour and tactics in dealing with this country.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com  
The Hill Times



Le journal de Montréal's Feb. 3 cover. Screenshot courtesy of X

# New Democrats need a new federal leader

The electoral window of opportunity is now, and under Jagmeet Singh, the party is failing to capitalize.

Matt Chilliak

Opinion



The New Democratic Party is struggling, and in order to turn things around, Jagmeet Singh needs to step down as leader—immediately.

Singh has led the party through two elections in the past eight years. During that time, the NDP has failed to gain seats. They've struggled to break above 20 per cent. And Singh's own favorability has reached an all-time low.

This is a New Democratic Party that has failed to inspire Canadians.

It's not that the NDP is normally on the cusp of winning government. In fact, polling in the teens is typical for Canada's third party. And it's not that Singh has underperformed previous NDP leaders. It took both Jack Layton and Ed Broadbent four elections to turn the party into a serious contender.

But the window of opportunity is now, and under Singh, the party is failing to capitalize.

The Liberal Party brand is at a low point following nine years under Justin Trudeau, and neither Mark Carney nor Chrystia Freeland are going to resurrect it. Unfortunately, voters wanting change aren't moving their support to Singh's NDP, but rather to Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives. This makes sense, given that the NDP has spent the past three years in a formal agreement supporting the Liberal minority government.

There's no question that Singh extracted major policy wins from

that agreement—and popular ones at that. Dental care and pharmacare are supported by majorities across political lines. Similar to medicare, New Democrats looked out for the little guy, ensuring Canada's working class has a stronger social safety net in which to fall when times get tough. But popular policies don't always translate to votes (just ask the Democrats down south). And while voters approve of the new social programs, they don't approve of the carbon tax—the only issue that Poilievre wants voters to believe matters in the upcoming election, even as the Liberal leadership contenders backtrack.

Carbon tax or no carbon tax, this election's top issue is U.S. President Donald Trump as he continues to antagonize Canada with tariffs and takeover threats. The American style of divisive politics is now on full display, and the impact will become impossible for any Canadian to ignore.

This is an opening for the NDP—should they find a leader who can inspire Canadians.

While the Liberals conduct their race to be the next John Turner, the NDP should embark on a leadership race of its own.

Who would be the NDP's leadership hopefuls? Certainly no one from their current bench of MPs—the best of whom would struggle with name recognition and being linked to the Liberal-NDP minority. No, what the federal NDP needs is its provincial leaders to step into the federal arena.

Specifically, Wab Kinew. He's Canada's highest polling premier, with 67-per-cent approval among Manitoba voters. Listening to Kinew speak about reconciliation, welcoming new Canadians, confronting Trump's tariffs—it's hard not to draw the conclusion that he's a generational talent.

The mechanisms of a leader change might seem rushed, but if the Liberals can do it, so can the NDP. Some might also question if a premier is allowed to do this—the constitutional rule against “dual mandates” prevents a provincial legislator from running for federal

office. However, it does not prevent them from running for leadership of a federal party. Kinew could maintain the role of premier while seeking the leader position, abstain from seeking any riding's nomination, and commit to only running in a byelection should the NDP win the election, making him prime minister. This may sound far-fetched, but it wouldn't be the first time a prime minister served from outside the Parliament. After winning the Liberal leader position in 1984, Turner was sworn in despite not holding a seat.

Of course, this entire plan hinges on Singh choosing to step down.

The latest NDP leadership review was held in October 2023 in Hamilton, Ont. Several provinces failed to even send full delegations. Singh garnered 81-per-cent support. It's generally thought that 70 per cent or below would trigger a leadership race.

We should be grateful for what Singh achieved during one of the most fraught, divisive, and angry periods in Canadian politics. A graceful exit handing over the baton to someone new would be the best way for Singh to secure that legacy.

Matt Chilliak is a political strategist who's worked on several NDP campaigns in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, as well as with Democratic candidates in the United States where he now resides. He was a voting delegate at the 2016 and 2023 federal NDP conventions.

The Hill Times

## Canadian Innovation: An Insurance Policy Against Biodiversity Loss

By Dr. Gabriela Mastromonaco, Senior Director, Wildlife Science, Toronto Zoo



Dr. Gabriela Mastromonaco

wildlife populations have plummeted by 73 per cent since 1970. This imbalance has caused widespread disruption to natural ecosystems, threatening biodiversity and undermining the resilience of the planet.

Canada, with the second-largest remaining wilderness area in the world, is uniquely positioned to reverse these trends. The country's 2030 Nature Strategy acknowledges the triple crises of biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution, setting an ambitious goal of halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. Achieving this goal will require protecting habitats, managing resources, and monitoring wildlife populations.

But these efforts alone aren't enough. Long-term threats, such as isolated breeding populations and unpredictable events like climate-induced reproductive challenges or ecosystem disruptions, continue to loom. These challenges demand innovative solutions to safeguard Canada's wildlife and ecosystems for generations to come.

At the Toronto Zoo, we've been focused on one such solution: biodiversity cryobanking. This cutting-edge approach acts as a biological insurance policy, preserving the genetic material of Canada's wildlife, particularly species at risk. Through cryopreservation, living cells such as sperm, eggs, embryos, and somatic cells are frozen at ultra-low temperatures, ensuring their viability for future use.

Cryobanking offers an unparalleled safety net for Canada's biodiversity. It allows us to preserve genetic diversity and combat the challenges of genetic isolation—an issue that's becoming increasingly critical for endangered species. The impact of this work

When you think of Canada's most iconic species, what comes to mind? Perhaps the powerful polar bear hunting seals on sea ice, or the majestic caribou migrating through the boreal forest and tundra. These species are not just symbols of Canada's identity—they are cornerstones of our ecosystems. But they are under threat. Climate change, pollution, and habitat loss are driving these species toward perilous declines, and without immediate action, we risk losing them forever—along with the ecological, cultural, and economic benefits they provide.

According to the World Wildlife Fund's 2024 Living Planet Report, global

is already evident. Since 2010, the Toronto Zoo's biodiversity cryobank facilitated the birth of 15 bison calves, including one from sperm that had been frozen for 35 years. This breakthrough demonstrates the transformative potential of cryobanking to revive and sustain vulnerable populations.

But this is only the beginning. To meet Canada's biodiversity conservation needs—including banking critically endangered species—the Toronto Zoo is working to expand its cryobank into a National Centre of Excellence for Conservation Cryobanking. However, scaling operations quickly and effectively will require federal partnership and investment.

Establishing a National Centre of Excellence for Conservation Cryobanking would accelerate efforts to protect Canada's wildlife by preserving genetic material from more species and fostering collaboration with Indigenous communities and conservation agencies. It would also help Canada meet its commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN's Nagoya Protocol on Biological Diversity.

Other countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and the United States, have recognized the immense potential of cryobanking, and are already investing in this emerging field. With federal funding and support, Canada can not only match these efforts but lead the way in safeguarding the world's biodiversity.

At the Toronto Zoo, we are ready to take on this challenge. Our next focus will be on protecting Canada's endangered caribou populations, working closely with Indigenous communities to collect and preserve genetic material and develop strategies to ensure their survival.

The Toronto Zoo's cryobanking work is already receiving global recognition. Last year, I was deeply honoured to be nominated for the Indianapolis Prize, known as the Nobel Prize of animal conservation. This recognition underscores the significance of our work and the potential it holds for Canada's conservation efforts.

To protect Canada's wildlife for future generations, we must act now. Federal investment in cryobanking will enable us to expand our efforts, harness cutting-edge science, and play a critical role in achieving national and international conservation goals.

Canada has the expertise, the tools, and the will to lead the world in this vital work. With federal partnership and funding, we can ensure that our iconic species—the polar bear, the caribou, and so many others—continue to thrive in the wild. By supporting innovative solutions like the Toronto Zoo's biodiversity cryobank, we can build a legacy of resilience and hope for Canada's ecosystems, wildlife, and future generations.

## NEWS

# ‘People aren’t laughing as much anymore,’ says Sen. Boehm after Trump repeats calls for Canada to become 51<sup>st</sup> state

Experts say a formal annexation of Canada is unlikely, but warn of a possible erosion to Canadian sovereignty.

BY SOPHALL DUCH

With the economic threat of a trade war with the United States staved off for now, the existential threat that U.S. President Donald Trump poses for Canada still looms large.

Almost lost in the chaos of the Feb. 3 negotiations—before Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) announced late that afternoon he’d secured a 30-day delay on incoming American tariffs—Trump was asked what the PM could do to change his mind on levying tariffs against Canada.

“I’d like to see Canada become our 51<sup>st</sup> state. We give them protection—military protection. We don’t need for them to build our cars,” said Trump to reporters in the Oval Office on Feb. 3 before his second call of the day with Trudeau.

These “51<sup>st</sup> state” comments from Trump aren’t new, but given the re-elected U.S. president’s renewed threats against Canada,

Canadians are taking the comments more seriously this time around.

Independent Senator Peter Boehm (Ontario) recalled being in the room in 2018 when Trump made that comment.

“Everyone laughed. Obviously, he made it again when the prime minister was in Mar-a-Lago, and everyone laughed. And he keeps saying it, and people aren’t laughing as much anymore,” said Boehm, a former career diplomat who was Canada’s deputy minister for the G7 Summit and Trudeau’s personal representative from July 2017, until his retirement in September 2018. Boehm joined the Red Chamber that fall.

Boehm pointed to Trump’s inauguration speech as indication of the president’s imperialist motivations.

“The president talked about a manifest destiny for the future. He talked about territorial expansion

of the U.S. So all of this would lead us to conclude that there might be a grain of truth,” said Boehm.

In his Jan. 20 address, Trump said: “the United States will once again consider itself a growing nation—one that increases our wealth, expands our territory, builds our cities, raises our expectations, and carries our flag into new and beautiful horizons. And we will pursue our manifest destiny into the stars, launching American astronauts to plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars.”

Trump’s manifest destiny comments referred to space exploration, but his talk of “territorial expansion” fits into a broader pattern of remarks concerning Canada becoming the 51<sup>st</sup> state—including repeatedly referring to Trudeau as a ‘governor’—taking back the Panama Canal, and buying Greenland. Trump has also

talked about wanting Canada’s waters, describing Canada as having a “very large faucet” that could be switched on.

Former Liberal foreign affairs minister Irwin Cotler said Trump’s comments should be seen primarily as “baiting rhetoric”—like the kind described in Trump’s book *The Art of the Deal*.

“So we’ll see more of this bluster,” said Cotler. “The question is: how much the bluster finds expression in policy?”

Cotler said the stayed executive order implementing tariffs is one example of the rhetoric nearly becoming policy. But it remains to be seen whether Trump will domestically frame that outcome as a win and move on, or if he will again manifest it as policy as deadlines to review potential tariffs approach.

Trump’s taunts may have actually had a positive impact on Canadian sovereignty, Cotler said, because they have “brought us together as a country.”

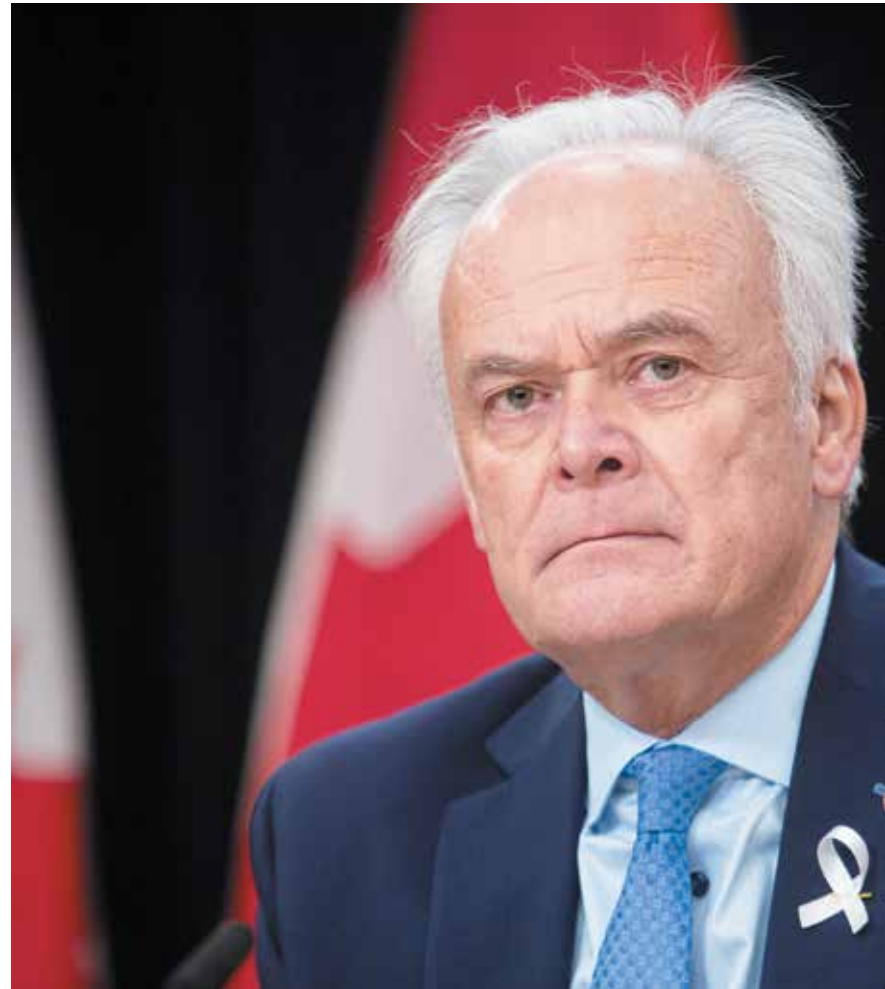
“We’re less of the post-national state now, and speaking more about our own assertion of national identity and sovereignty,” said Cotler. “That’s a good thing.”

He added that the motivation it’s created for Canada to reduce internal trade barriers, diversify external trading relationships beyond the U.S., increase defence spending, and improve border security are also positive outcomes for boosting sovereignty.

## Annexation vexation

While Trump’s comments about Canada joining the United States are troubling, experts said concerns that America would officially annex this country are minimal.

“The prospect for a formal annexation is remote. It would



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, meets with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House on Feb. 13, 2017. Photograph courtesy of Justin Trudeau’s Twitter

have to be affected by military force, by an invasion of our country by bound forces by the United States, and that’s not going to happen. Trump knows that’s not going to happen,” said Ben Rowswell, convenor of the Circle for Democratic Solidarity, and a former Canadian ambassador to Venezuela.

Alasdair Roberts, author of *The Adaptable Country: How Canada Can Survive the Twenty-First Century*, said Congressional approval would be hard to get for Trump to formally annex us.

“I don’t think he seriously wants or expects Canada to become a 51<sup>st</sup> state. He probably knows that’s not going to happen. And practically speaking, no



ISG Senator Peter Boehm says Canada's multilateral relations have 'always been a very important counterweight to our almost overwhelming bilateral relationship with the United States.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Article 5 says that NATO member states agree that an armed attack against one "shall be considered an attack against them all," and they will come to the aid of the targeted member "to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area." The treaty's mutual defence clause treaty only refers to an armed attack and makes no mention of annexation or aggression via economic coercion.

Boehm, who's also served at the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C., said typically when an "annexation takes place, there's a referendum—usually a bogus one—before anything happen." But he added that that likely won't happen since polling numbers have indicated how unpopular annexation is in Canada.

### Standing up for sovereignty

What are experts concerned about? An erosion to Canada's sovereignty.

Roberts said Trump's efforts suggest the president wants to weaken Canada in this regard.

"He wants to weaken the Canadian economy and destabilize Canadian politics so that the country is in a much weaker negotiating position on a range of matters. I suspect for him the ideal outcome is a Canada that is formally independent, but practically subject to U.S. influence," said Roberts.

"It's about the erosion or loss of Canadian sovereignty—the effective capacity of Canadians to govern their own country. That's what is at issue. And you can lose effective sovereignty, even if you're still formally independent," added Roberts.

Rowswell added that a loss of sovereignty can happen "once there's a general perception among your own population that your own institutions are no longer in control, that the significant decisions affecting our country are made by a foreign power."

This 'perception' is dangerous, and Rowswell said Canada needs to send a strong response.

Rowswell said he took issue with White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt telling CNN that "Canada is bending the knee, just like Mexico" following news that tariffs were paused.

"That's an official pronouncement from President Trump's own spokesperson, that Canada is now subordinate to the United States. I think on that basis, we would be entirely justified in renouncing the agreement that we made [on Feb. 3] and challenging the president to apply the tariffs.

To teach the United States a lesson that Canada is stronger than you know, that our knee is not bowed. We're standing on our two feet," said Rowswell.

### A 'collective' counterweight

Standing up to Trump is one thing, but questions have emerged about whether Canada would be alone if he were to make good on efforts to undermine the country's independence.

"Nobody is going to come to the rescue if Canadian sovereignty is at risk. The only people who can preserve Canadian sovereignty are Canadians," said Roberts. "Every other country in the world will be guided by what lies in its national interest."

Where Canada and other countries can come together is by protecting multilateralism.

"The only way that Trump will be stopped is if other liberal democracies band together to pool their resources to overwhelm the power of the United States as it turns from ally and partner to adversary," said Rowswell. "And that's why we've got to redouble our relations with other countries, to strengthen our alliances and institutions through which we exercise collective power."

Roberts said strengthening ties with other nations is not only imperative given the current situation, but also necessary in the long term.

"This isn't just about Trump. I think we should understand that even if a Democrat were in office, the United States would be more inwardly focused than it has been in the last 40 years. That era of globalization—in which we could take for granted that the United States was interested in promoting openness and democratic values internationally—that era is over," said Roberts.

Boehm said bolstering our multilateral relationships will be a "very important counterweight to our almost overwhelming bilateral relationship with the United States."

And with Trump also putting the European Union in his tariff crosshairs, this could be the right moment for Canada to ensure it has that heavyweight in its corner to use their "collective power" to resist Washington's "economic aggression."

"It's essential for us to reach out to European countries right away, to say that we'll stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them and to co-ordinate any response to American tariff threats," said Rowswell.

This is a strategy that Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) said she's pursuing.

"We need also to work along with allies that we haven't always worked as closely with, which are of course, Europeans, the Brits, and also our friends in Asia," Joly told reporters on Feb. 4, adding that includes Canada's second-biggest trading partner, Mexico. "We should never take it for granted."

But Roberts said we can't solely be outwardly focused, and must also have "a national conversation about what we're trying to accomplish as a country."

Roberts said he's calling for a royal commission, similar to the 1982-85 Macdonald Commission on the "long-term economic potential, prospects, and challenges facing the Canadian federation," and for more regular first ministers' conference to help "promote" national consensus.

"Presently, we don't have the Team Canada approach," he said. "If you were at a team, you would be practicing in the off season. At the moment, we have first ministers who only meet after the crisis hits."

—With files from Ian Campbell  
sduch@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*

Republican would support that," Roberts, who's also a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, told *The Hill Times*.

"Even if it were possible—because Canada wouldn't be the 51<sup>st</sup> state, it would be several states—and if several new states were added to the union, the electoral college would go basically permanently blue. So that's just bluster."

Something that could work in Canada's favour in preventing a formal military annexation are both countries' membership in the NATO military alliance.

"If one looks at the security element from an Article 5 perspective in NATO—that is if one member is attacked the others will support—never would I have thought in my previous career, and even now, that that would even be a possibility in terms of the North American relationship, and particularly between Canada and the U.S.," said Boehm.



Latvian President Egils Levits, left, then-defence minister Anita Anand, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visit the Adazi Military Base in Latvia where Canadian soldiers deployed to Operation Reassurance are stationed on March 8, 2022. *Flickr* photograph courtesy of NATO



## Innovative Medicines Canada Appoints Patrick Hupé as VP, Government and Stakeholder Relations

IMC is pleased to welcome Patrick Hupé, M.Sc., MBA to our senior leadership team.

With 27 years of experience in government relations, public policy, stakeholder engagement, marketing, and business development, Patrick has held leadership roles at Medtronic Canada, Pfizer Canada, and Roche Diagnostics. He has successfully led teams across 35 countries, executing large-scale strategies and navigating complex regulatory landscapes.

Fluently bilingual and based in Montréal, Patrick combines scientific expertise and strategic business acumen to advance healthcare policy. He will play a key role in strengthening collaboration with governments and stakeholders to support a strong, sustainable life sciences sector in Canada.

Learn more about IMC at [innovativemedicines.ca](https://innovativemedicines.ca).



## NEWS

# ‘Canada First rally’ expected to be major rebranding of Conservative campaign, say senior Conservatives

The Conservative Party is encouraging attendees of the Feb. 15 ‘Canada First rally’ to ‘wear red and white clothes in honour of our nation’s flag,’ according to an RSVP email sent to party members.

BY ABBAS RANA

The Conservative Party’s upcoming rally in Ottawa is expected to serve as a major rebranding effort, shifting the focus from “Axe the Tax” to “Canada First,” and is anticipated to act as an unofficial launch of the next election campaign, say some senior Conservatives.

“This is the launch of a different branding that we’re going towards,” a top Conservative told *The Hill Times*. “It’s a different campaign. It is a major shift. We’ve been testing new messaging because the problem with the carbon tax election is that it may not be relevant in a couple of weeks.”

The national Conservative caucus is set to hold a special meeting in Ottawa on Feb. 14, followed by a major rally in downtown Ottawa the next day where Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) will give a major speech. The rally is expected to mark a significant rebranding of the party’s campaign. As of press time last week, neither the party nor the caucus chair had shared specific details about either event with caucus members or Hill staff.

For more than a year, the Conservatives have centred their federal election strategy around opposition to the carbon tax, using the slogan “Axe the Tax.” Conservatives have spent lots of money on advertising, and have repeated the “axe the tax” mantra hundreds of times in the House over the last year. However, the political landscape has shifted dramatically following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) early January announcement of his upcoming exit, prompting a Liberal leadership election that will be decided on March 9.

Adding to the uncertainty, U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to impose a 25-per-cent tariff on all Canadian exports to the U.S. On Feb. 1, he threatened to impose the measure on Feb. 4, before pausing it for



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured at an ‘Axe the Tax’ event in Ottawa on Jan. 9, 2025, will now pivot to a ‘Canada First,’ message at a rally on Feb. 15 in Ottawa. It represents a significant rebranding effort, and is regarded as the unofficial kickoff for the next election campaign, say some senior Conservatives. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

30 days. If implemented, these tariffs could affect hundreds of thousands of Canadian jobs, and jeopardize the \$1-trillion annual trade relationship between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the new Liberal leader—who will also become prime minister—could opt to call an early election before the House returns on March 24, as opposition parties have signalled their intent to bring down the government. If that doesn’t happen, the contest winner may choose to leverage their campaign momentum and transition directly into a general election campaign. Since the leadership race began, all three major Liberal candidates have pledged to scrap the carbon tax, a signature Liberal policy. These developments have forced the Conservatives to rethink their campaign strategy.

According to Conservative sources, the party has spent recent weeks testing new messaging, and Poilievre’s Feb. 15 speech is expected to unveil the Tories’ revised campaign branding moving forward.

“It is getting interesting,” said the senior Conservative. “Things are firming up. It looks like that we may be heading towards an election for real.”

For the “Canada First Rally with Pierre Poilievre in Ottawa” on Feb. 15, scheduled to take place at the Rogers Centre at 1 p.m., attendees have been encouraged by the party to wear red and white in “honour of our nation’s flag” according to an email obtained by *The Hill Times*.

To accommodate party members, volunteers, campaign teams, and their families and friends travelling from various regions of Ontario, the party has arranged same-day bus transportation.



Donald Trump’s threatened tariffs on Canadian goods have shifted the focus entirely to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s efforts to persuade the new U.S. administration to abandon the proposed measures. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Those interested have been asked to sign up in advance. Based on the number of registrants and their locations, the party will provide details on pickup points and departure times, according to a second email obtained by *The Hill Times*.

“Everyone is invited to Pierre Poilievre’s Conservative Canada First Rally on February 15<sup>th</sup> in Ottawa! This is an exciting opportunity to showcase together in putting CANADA FIRST!” states an email sent out to Conservatives last week. “To make it easy for everyone to attend we’re organizing bus transportation, sign up now to secure your spot—only those on the list will be allowed on the bus.”

Ian Todd, chief of staff to Poilievre, also sent out an email recently to all Conservative Hill

staffers, asking them to attend the rally along with their families.

“Please mark your calendar for an important Leader’s event I am encouraging you to attend,” wrote Todd in his email sent out last week with the subject line “Leader’s event—Saturday, February 15,” and obtained by *The Hill Times*. “Please bring family and friends. Caucus members will also be attending.” After providing, date, time and location of the event, Todd wrote: “Let’s put CANADA FIRST! Looking forward to seeing everyone on February 15!”

Senior Conservatives interviewed for this article said that the caucus has not met since the December holiday break, during which several significant political developments have occurred, making a meeting necessary. During the Feb. 14 session, caucus members will have the chance to share their insights with colleagues and the party leader about what they heard from their constituents. Additionally, the party is expected to provide an update on election preparedness. The next day, Conservative sources said, they expect the Ottawa rally to be an unofficial launch of the campaign.

“It’s fair to say this will be the unofficial launch of the campaign,” said a second senior Conservative. “This will be a chance for him [Poilievre] to try some new ideas. We’re already in a campaign now. The campaign has already started. It’s just that we are running against three candidates instead of one.”

Meanwhile, political insiders interviewed for this article said that Trump’s threatened tariffs have triggered a classic “rally around the flag” effect for the Liberals, posing a significant challenge for Poilievre in maintaining relevance. This shift has

also created an opportunity for the new Liberal leader, who will be elected on March 9, to seize momentum and strengthen their position.

“The two fundamental issues for Canada’s existence are No. 1, national unity, and No. 2, U.S. relations,” said Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, in an interview with *The Hill Times*. “So if either of those two issues come up in any significant way, they block out the sun.”

In addition to tariffs, Trump has also mused about annexing Canada. Since November, Canada-U.S. relations have dominated the political agenda, with media attention focused on the government’s efforts to prevent such scenarios. Trudeau and his senior ministers have been actively engaged in diplomatic efforts, making frequent trips to the U.S. to lobby senior administration officials in an attempt to persuade Trump to withdraw the proposed tariffs.

“The big question—and we’re going to see this in polls coming up, for sure—when we ask Canadians ‘What’s the most important issue facing the country, or the issue that they want to have discussed most in the election,’ we’re going to see Canada-U.S. relations right at the top of the list, and things that are affected by Canada’s U.S. relations close by,” said Bricker. “So we’re not going to be having an election about the issues that Pierre Poilievre has been campaigning on. I mean, they’ll be there, but this will be the most important.”

Bricker, however, pointed out that the intense focus on Canada’s trade relations with America is currently benefiting Trudeau, but he will not be leading the party in the next election. Whether the new Liberal leader will inherit this advantage remains uncertain. Bricker said that the “rally around the flag” effect typically favours the incumbent government, as they are the ones in a position to make key decisions.

In times of crisis, Bricker said, opposition leaders face significant challenges in being part of the national conversation. He pointed to the 1995 national unity crisis, during which then-Reform Party leader Preston Manning struggled with the same issue. Now, he said, Poilievre is working to establish his relevance, but whether he will succeed remains to be seen.

Bricker said that one of the “funny things” in this scenario is that, last November, the Liberal Party was really hoping that if Trump got re-elected, it would resuscitate Trudeau’s political prospects. It didn’t look like it was happening, and his party pushed him out, but now that’s actually happening, but not to his benefit.

Bricker said that the Liberals have an opportunity, but they are also up against what he described as the “Mike Tyson of political realities”: a strong public desire for change. Whether a leadership change will be enough to satisfy voters’ appetite for new direction remains to be seen, he said.

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*The Hill Times*

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# Editorial

## Editorial

# Our neighbourhood has become a lot less safe

Our next-door neighbour has set their own house on fire, and the embers are blowing our way.

Worse still, our neighbour is trying to convince us that a burning house is something desirable, all while fanning the flames in our direction. Others, out of the immediate path of destruction, are staying quiet, hopeful that our neighbour's attentions are not drawn towards them.

This is where we find ourselves a mere three weeks into the second administration of U.S. President Donald Trump. With the stroke of a pen, he and his acolytes have soured two centuries of amity with Canada with ridiculous threats of tariffs and attempted economic coercion that would see us become the "51<sup>st</sup> state."

And what an offer that is—Canadians, too, could be subject to an unelected tech billionaire and his cronies' dismantling of the national government, gaining access in a couple of weeks to the financial information and institutional power that America's adversaries could spend decades trying to reach without success.

Thankfully, like all bullies, Trump has turned tail at the slightest hint of resistance from someone he can't control. First, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum offered him an off-ramp from his ludicrous demands with a promise to post more troops at her country's northern border. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau followed suit, re-iterating agreements already reached with then-U.S. president Joe

Biden back in December, and some extra action on drug smuggling, with the appointment of a fancy-sounding "fentanyl czar."

But the decision to delay the tariffs by 30 days is a pause, not a reprieve. We can expect this idea to be raised—then backtracked—again and again, chewing up government, business, and diplomatic resources that are sorely needed elsewhere. Meanwhile, domestic issues like housing, the federal debt, and climate action will fall to the wayside as Canada's leaders are forced to contend with the whims of a would-be despot.

There is plenty to be said about how our leadership utterly failed to prepare for this eventuality. Trump made clear almost immediately after the 2020 election that he planned to return to the White House at the next possible opportunity. That left a decent amount of time to strategize, to look for additional trade opportunities that do not involve a partner that has turned increasingly volatile.

But it appears that they were happy to act as if Trump's first four years were an aberration, that one of the United States' two major parties had not been transformed into one that accepted his every word as gospel.

So here we are. Unfortunately, it's likely to get far uglier than booing at sporting events and empty shelves at liquor stores before this period of turmoil is over.

The Hill Times

## Letters to the Editor



Image courtesy of pexels.com

# Alberta promotes climate-destroying oil production, and plans to dig for coal, writes McElroy

Re: "Communities deserve more support as the global economy changes," (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 15, by Rachel Samson). Rachel Samson is right. Communities certainly need more support, with the unavoidable energy transition from fossil fuels and increasingly challenging climate-change disasters—piled on top of looming trade wars and population growth. We must future-proof Canada rather than asking for more federal funds. The federal government is already on a collision course with a ballooning deficit and huge debt as wildfires, floods, and droughts ravage our country.

Look to the industry that caused the climate crisis, which is dragging its feet on the energy transition. Despite near-record profits, the federal response has long been a near-continuous increase in subsidies.

In 2023 alone, Canada provided \$18.6-billion in subsidies to the fossil fuels industry. This amounts to about \$1,100 per household. Why not apply the standard free-enterprise model, so favoured by conservative economists, and eliminate the subsidies? Let the price of fossil fuels rise to their natural level. (This would have to be done carefully, following a long-term plan, to reduce the shock on communities and

energy-dependent industries.) The resulting federal savings could assist communities to meet the coming challenges and curtail the provision of extra profits to shareholders.

Reducing subsidies would increase costs to the consumer, but individuals and companies could alter their usage to minimize the impact. On the personal transportation front, the poor would save money, since they are largely dependent on public transit, which would be better supported by re-directing part of the subsidies. At the high end, the most profligate users of fossil fuels—with their hummers, yachts and jet planes—would absorb a proportionate amount of the cost. This would leave the middle class less affected.

The goal is to wean the country off the fossil fuels that cause climate change, destroy our environment, drive infrastructure costs, create devastating wildfires and floods, and bankrupt governments—without killing the economy. There are alternatives. Alberta is promoting climate-destroying oil production, and is even planning to dig for coal, while being the best place in Canada to produce green energy: wind and solar, hydro and pumped hydro, and geothermal. Go figure.

Tom McElroy  
 Toronto, Ont.





## COMMENT

# Captain Canada's got a hot mic

Up until Doug Ford's hot mic comments about Donald Trump, he was smooth sailing as Captain Canada to a third term, but he's hit some rough waters.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Captain Canada has no clothes. Ontario's Doug Ford lost that standing when it was revealed last week in a leaked hot microphone recording that he was a huge Trump fan who celebrated when Donald Trump was victorious.

"On election day, was I happy this guy won? One hundred per cent I was," Ford told supporters while chatting with a few of them on Feb. 3 at a campaign event. "Then the guy pulled out the knife and fucking yanked it in us."

In that regard, Ford joined a minority of Canadians as the vast majority were hoping for

another outcome to the American election.

Ford said all the right things in the leadup to the tariff war, including wearing the mantle of Captain Canada in multiple American television interviews.

His negative numbers were neutralized as a result of these interventions, and it looked like Ford would be sailing to a third term.

Then came the revelations of what he really thinks. Ford called a snap election banking on two things: the unpopularity of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and the popularity of Ford's personal fight for Canada.

But now he has faced a serious hit to his plan on both those fronts.

First, the prime minister's reaction to the tariffs, including an incredible speech to the nation and a robust response to Trump's proposed plan, have actually boosted his popularity.

It is hard for Ford to run against Trudeau, and then get on television to say how we all want to work together.

Second, Ford's attachment to Trump, and the fact that he is sticking to a multi-million Starlink satellite contract with Elon Musk is causing pain on political fronts.

Ford briefly announced he would cancel the deal, but then revoked his cancellation when the



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and Ontario Premier Doug Ford at the First Ministers' meeting in Ottawa on Jan. 15, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

tariff threat was put on pause for 30 days.

Trump may have paused, and his attention temporarily pivoted to an insane suggestion to kick all Palestinians out of Gaza and turn the place into an American-owned resort. For a president who campaigned on staying out of other countries' business, he is off to a poor start.

Trump continually repeats his dream to literally turn Canada into the 51st state. And Canadians are literally not buying it. The national move to "Buy Canadian" and to refuse American purchases or travel shows no signs of pausing.

Trump has even managed to turn Quebecers into ardent Canadian nationalists. The boycott is being felt so broadly that Boston Pizza felt compelled to underscore its Canadian identity.

The company took the unprecedented step of clarifying through social media that despite its name, it is not American.

In fact, it is so Canadian, it was even started by a former Mountie.

The Boston Pizza *mea culpa* is proof positive that the Buy Canadian movement is working. Even after the American president postponed tariff threats for 30 days, Canadians appear to be launching their own trade war.

And if the label or destination is American, the answer is no.

As for Ford's Conservative counterpart in Ottawa, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is still reeling from the fact that his carbon tax election has been pulverized by a change in Liberal leadership and the fight against Trump's political agenda.

Poilievre is also too closely aligned with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, the only Canadian politician bent on weakening her country's leadership by siding with Trump.

It took Smith only hours after the announcement that Trudeau had been successful in postponing tariffs for the Alberta premier to start attacking him again, and defending Trump's actions as understandable.

Only a month ago, pundits were claiming that Smith was in the ascendancy as Trudeau was leaving and Poilievre appeared poised to become prime minister.

Thank Trump for a trade war that vaults the federal Liberals into top spot in Ontario for the first time in almost two years.

Mainstreet Research polling published last week showed the federal Liberals at 43 per cent while the Conservatives are at 39 per cent. That has not been replicated in the provincial election trending yet, but Ford's support of Trump is already provoking some movement in the race.

The hatred for Trudeau that was supposed to be the underpinnings of a successful Ford re-election has diminished, and with the fight for Canada, the premier has to be cautious about his attacks on the prime minister.

As for Poilievre, he has largely disappeared, not doubt huddled with supporters trying to craft a new three-word slogan as "Canada is Broken" no longer cuts it.

Perhaps he should pivot to a four-word pitch.

There is a new MAGA hat circulating featuring the Canadian flag, and the words Make America Go Away.

That is a hat the Tories should be wearing because as long as the threat of Trump's annexation plans remains, Canada will not be broken.

Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister and a former deputy prime minister.

*The Hill Times*

# Freeland's flaws

Chrystia Freeland should have vacated the scene for a while, put some distance between herself and the prime minister, and then she could have returned to politics in 2025 as a white knight to save the Liberal Party. But you can't kill the king and be the king.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Sometimes making a political prediction can seem totally right, but then it ends up being totally wrong.

That might be the case for me regarding a prediction I made five years ago about Liberal

leadership contestant Chrystia Freeland.

My fearless forecast back then was that Freeland would absolutely, 100 per cent guaranteed, without a shred of a doubt—be the person the Liberals would select to succeed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as Liberal leader.

But now that doesn't seem like it's going to happen.

In fact, all indications—at this point—are that Mark Carney will almost certainly win the Liberal leadership crown, and it won't be a close race.

Indeed, Carney has already scored the endorsements of several key Liberal cabinet ministers, including Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, Energy Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, and Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon.

On top of that, according to a recent Leger poll, Carney holds a whopping 40-point lead over Freeland amongst Liberal voters, 57 per cent to 17 per cent.

The same poll showed that 55 per cent of Liberal voters believe Carney is best suited to deal with the Trump administration.

In other words, Carney holds all the momentum and seems all but unstoppable.

So, how could I be so wrong about Freeland?

Well, in my defence, not too long ago she definitely had a lot going for her.

For one thing, her political resumé is impeccable and impressive.

Keep in mind that Trudeau appointed her to a number of important, high-profile cabinet posts, such as international trade minister, foreign affairs minister, deputy prime minister, and finance minister.

To her credit, Freeland performed all of her cabinet responsibilities quite well.

Given such a good track record, given the confidence Trudeau obviously had in her, and given her steady succession of cabinet promotions, you couldn't help but get the feeling that the Liberal Party was grooming her to be its next leader.

At least, I couldn't.

Plus, there's one more point to consider.

Freeland was arguably the most accomplished and prominent woman in the federal cabinet, which I thought would make her the go-to candidate to replace Trudeau, given how the Liberal Party prides itself on its support of feminism.

Surely, I thought, the time had finally come for the Liberals to pick a woman as their leader.



Liberal leadership candidate Chrystia Freeland, pictured on the Hill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Remember, the Liberals are the only major federal party that hasn't had a female leader.

Yet, despite all those positives, it also seems Freeland suffered from one major flaw: poor political judgment.

Part of my assumption about her was that she would have the political savvy to quit the Liberal cabinet to "spend more time with her family" as soon as it became apparent that Trudeau's political star was waning.

Had she done that, had she vacated the scene for a while, had she put some distance between herself and the prime minister, she could have returned to politics in 2025 as a white knight to save the Liberal Party.

But she stayed loyal too long, meaning her political DNA is now

hopelessly intertwined with the unpopular Trudeau.

Then, after learning she was going to be fired from the cabinet, she launched a not-so-subtle attack on the prime minister, which helped accelerate his decision to resign, a move that likely made her powerful enemies in the party.

As the saying goes, you can't kill the king and be the king.

All of this goes to show why it's risky to make political predictions.

Still, it's possible Freeland might yet win the Liberal leadership.

If she does, remember you heard it from me first!

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

*The Hill Times*

## COMMENT

# We can no longer trust America



Nothing could be worse than going along to get along with a person, U.S. President Donald Trump, who is inherently dishonest, untrustworthy, and determined to bend everyone to his will by sheer bullying and aggression, writes Michael Harris. Photograph courtesy of Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons

The great novelist Sinclair Lewis published a book about a fictional America where an elected president pulls off an authoritarian coup.

The book, *It Can't Happen Here*, tells a story that uncannily anticipated what is going on in the U.S. under Trump.

The novel follows the rise of American politician Berzelius "Buzz" Windrip, a demagogue who rises to power by stoking fear, and vowing to bring in draconian economic and social reforms.

His populist platform also promises to make America great and prosperous, again. Sounding familiar?

Once in office, Windrip seizes control of everything. He outlaws dissent, and incarcerates his political enemies in concentration camps. "Lock her up" ring any bells?

One of the fictional dictator-president's first acts in office was to eliminate the power of Congress.

His "Corpo" government, dominated by wealthy businessmen, also curtails the rights of women and minorities.

Those accused of crimes against the government are tried in kangaroo courts run by lackeys of the dictator-president.

In the novel, the majority of Americans support the dictator's extreme measures, which they see as painful, but necessary to restoring American power and influence.

Life is imitating art in Trump's America. A growing number of commentators are beginning to say that a coup is in fact underway in the U.S., spearheaded by the world's richest man and the world's biggest ego.

This creepy and lawless duo has checked ever box on the road to fascism. They have undermined the rule of law, the Constitution, and the faith of Americans in their institutions, from the FBI to a free press.

Unless governments realize that Trump in office is just part two of the Jan. 6, 2021, coup attempt at the Capitol, the temptation will be to appease him.

Give him what he wants on the border, jump through hoops on his trade-deficit baloney, and accept his bizarre foreign policy without meaningful condemnation.

Nothing could be worse than going along to get along with a person who is inherently dishonest, untrustworthy, and determined to bend everyone to his will by sheer bullying and aggression.

Thankfully, most politicians in Canada—with the exception of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith—get it.

Canada can never again assume that America is our devoted friend who will look out for our interests or appreciate our friendship. It's time to strengthen our country from within, and reach out to countries who, like us, can no longer count on a world order run by America.

Meanwhile, everyone should remember the words of Kissinger.

*Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.*

*The Hill Times*

Canada can never again assume that America is our devoted friend who will look out for our interests or appreciate our friendship. It's time to strengthen our country from within, and reach out to countries who, like us, can no longer count on a world order run by America.

Michael Harris



Harris

Continued from page 1

And who knows whether the United States will stand by Ukraine in its war with Russia, or leave Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on his own?

So far, U.S. President Donald Trump has sent mixed messages. Continued support, support as a loan, and support in exchange for a guaranteed supply of rare earths from Ukraine.

Canada and Mexico learned the dangers of being America's friend in very different circumstances.

Out of the blue, Trump launched a savage economic attack on both of his reliable allies and his biggest trading partners.

Using inflated trade deficit numbers, and in the case of Canada, exaggerated claims of border abuses, Trump slapped a 25-per-cent tariff on all goods coming into the U.S. from Canada and Mexico. His friends. As for China, his espoused enemy, the tariff was 10 per cent.

Trump enacted that tariff against China, but he has since "paused" the imposition of the 25-per-cent tariffs for a month for both Canada and Mexico.

Should he ultimately impose them, it would cost millions of jobs in Canada and Mexico. And it would also effectively kill Ontario's auto industry. That's why Premier Doug Ford described Trump's tariff threat as being "like a family member stabbing you right in the heart."

The final irony? According to most economists, it would also damage the U.S. economy, and trigger a new round of inflation.

Why was Canada caught so flat-footed by Trump's economic belligerence? Part of the reason is never asking the "what-if" question. Why this failure of imagination? No one saw the possibility of Americans electing a rogue president.

No one thought an American president would go after his traditional allies, including the European Union, with the threat of ruinous tariffs.

“ THIS CREEPY AND LAWLESS DUO HAS CHECKED EVERY BOX ON THE ROAD TO FASCISM. THEY HAVE UNDERMINED THE RULE OF LAW, THE CONSTITUTION, AND THE FAITH OF AMERICANS IN THEIR INSTITUTIONS, FROM THE FBI TO A FREE PRESS.

No one thought that an American president would say he wanted to take over Canada and Greenland, and take back the Panama Canal.

No one thought an American president would ever suggest ethnic cleansing in Gaza to make way for an international resort, a vile real-estate project that would leave more than two million people who own the land forcibly uprooted and stateless.

No one ever thought that an American president would usurp the powers of Congress or undermine the rule of law with an abusive overuse of executive orders.

No one ever thought that an American president—especially from the party of law and order—would pardon felons convicted of assaulting police at the U.S. Capitol Building on Jan. 6, 2021, and then go after the law officers and prosecutors who put them behind bars?

No one ever thought that an American president would endorse mass deportation, or ship undocumented migrants to Guantanamo Bay.

No one ever thought that an American president would empower an unelected billionaire to shut down whole government departments, or promote mass resignations, or firings in the federal public service. Again, the jurisdiction of Congress, not the world's richest man.

And who would have thought that an American president would declare that there are only two sexes, men and women? What about the millions of people who don't fit the 1950s mould?

But back in 1935, with fascism gripping Europe, one American did foresee the possibility of a U.S. president becoming a dictator.

## COMMENT

This is a call for us to protect each other across the differences—because of the differences, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# Canada land and spirit

When Canadians have pride in each other, we are unstoppable because of the strength of our shared sense of spirit.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—Canada is land. From the Pacific Ocean to the Arctic to the Atlantic, from the Coast Mountains to the Saint-Elias range to the Arctic Cordillera and over to the Torngat, from the Kazan to the Churchill to the Bonaventure, from the grasslands to the tundra, it's all Canada.

One ironic piece of Canada is that many Canadians have never been truly North. Some have never set foot outside of the big

metropolitan cities of Toronto or Richmond to see the stars or the northern lights. Yet we maintain a sense of pride in this vast area we call home from coast to coast to coast.

You don't have to be boating down the mighty Churchill River to know that it's powerful. The stories of its power have been passed down from family to family for thousands of generations, from Inuit and First Nations and Métis to settlers. It's part of who we are, baked in like genes.

The land is both a source of conflict amongst us and the thing that brings us together. Land back and land acknowledgements, all in the same day. We know that this is Indigenous land and we know it's Canada that has done some dumb things to Indigenous Peoples.

Yet the land continues to bring us together. We are complicated like that, and we know it. We can do juxtaposition—it's pretty much who we are as Canadians.

We now are living in a paradox of reconciliation, and yet we want to feel patriotic. This is the time to remember that Canada is

“  
WHAT DO WE  
LOSE WHEN  
WE CAN'T  
FIND COMMON  
GROUND? WHEN  
THE ORANGE  
TYRANT  
BECAME OUR  
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CANADIAN  
POPULACE.”

about working through juxtaposition, and it's perfectly fine to be patriotic standing up at the Senators game while knowing we can do better. That's what adults do: stand up for what we have and what we aspire to be, and then be able to describe the difference.

Every so often the paradoxes come to bite us in the butt. We say we're multicultural, but really we live like layers in our neighbourhoods, and the ethnic layers don't mix. Like a layer cake, this ethnic group rarely crosses over into that group.

What do we lose when we can't find common ground? When the orange tyrant became our shared enemy, all the layers joined into one irritated Canadian populace. But this is not a call for the mixing pot analogy because that never worked—erasing cultural gifts doesn't build community, but you can disrespect the crap out of each other.

This is a call for us to protect each other across the differences—because of the differences. Just how Canadian is that, asynchronous federalism and all?

Elders often will share stories about the land teaching humility. Some might interpret this as about how the land will break you through blizzards and such. While totally true, the Elders' messages are more about how we need each other to thrive with this land. It's not a simple message, it's quite a complicated message. But that's what we do in this country—we respect the complication. We live in it every day. It's part of our spirit as Canadians.

This time has some wonderful tones of the 2010 Olympics, when Canada roared its pride at the opening ceremonies led by the Four Host Nations. We were all together. We are truly strongest when we are together. When Canadians have pride in each other, we are unstoppable because of the strength of our shared sense of spirit.

On Indigenous land, Canada land and spirit.

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.

*The Hill Times*

## COMMENT

If the cost of mollifying U.S. President Donald Trump, pictured, is putting on a bit of a show, it's cheap at the price. But I couldn't help but wonder how prepared we are on the back end to actually make good on anything we are pledging to do, writes Matt Gurney. Photograph courtesy of Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons



# Dealing with Trump is going to involve some up-front performance

But let's not forget the back end. Fixing our correctional and justice systems will help demonstrate to the Americans that Canada is a good partner. It's also a damn good idea on its own merits. Let's add it to the list, eh?

Matt Gurney



Opinion

**T**ORONTO—The deal announced between Canada and the United States to delay by 30 days the threatened imposition of tariffs by the White House involves an increased focus on our border security. As many observers have already noted, much of what was announced was simply a re-announcement of an earlier

package the federal government had pledged to execute. On top of those initiatives, we also have steps taken by other Canadian governments. For instance, Alberta and Ontario have each committed provincial resources to stepping up the patrol of the U.S.-Canadian border.

This is all to the good. We, of course, should be patrolling our own border, and to the—significant—extent any of this can be deemed a mere theatrical gesture, if the cost of mollifying U.S. President Donald Trump is putting on a bit of a show, it's cheap at the price.

But I couldn't help but wonder how prepared we are on the back end to actually make good on anything we are pledging to do.

I just don't mean cops, troops, frontline border agents, and all the equipment they need. Are our courts in a position to actually lock up anyone all this enhanced border presence may happen to arrest?

Some readers will recall the controversy in recent years over the slow pace of judicial appointments by the federal government. Ottawa, which has sole jurisdictional authority to appoint judges, had fallen asleep at the switch. Accumulating judicial vacancies were resulting in a bottleneck in the court system. Suspects were

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being arrested and charged, and either bailed or detained pending trial, but the lack of judges made timely trials impossible. Charges were being dismissed because of these delays. In some cases, this resulted in absolutely awful and heinous crimes going unprosecuted.

Credit where due. The government did eventually come out of its own torpor. Although there remain empty seats in this country's courthouses, there has been progress. Many judges have been appointed.

But the pandemic, coupled with the failure to rapidly fill vacancies, has undeniably created a backlog. We have not yet seen the final case that will be dismissed for want of prosecution due to these court delays. And long waits for trial results in people being released on bail who might be otherwise held in custody if the prospect of a speedy trial existed.

And that got me thinking.

It was just a few days ago that I realized, as part of my daily news reading, I had seen a series of unrelated stories involving cases that had been thrown out due to procedural delays in the justice system, or crimes committed by those out on bail. And that got me wondering how it would play, both at

home and especially in Washington, D.C., if our new border enforcement teams—with their body armour, rifles and leased helicopters—spend the next few months whisking to and fro along the border making dramatic arrests that will hopefully be picked up by Fox News ... and then every last one of those guys gets immediately released on bail because courtroom delays make it impossible to hold them pending a trial. And then maybe even further down the line, the trial is so thoroughly delayed that the individuals simply have all the charges against them dropped.

Other jurisdictions much like ours do not struggle to try people in a timely way. Though they are all getting pardons now, the U.S. was convicting and incarcerating individuals involved in Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol Hill attacks within months. The recent awful race riots in the United Kingdom saw arrests and convictions of some participants within weeks.

Canada seems to think that these kinds of proceedings should take years.

To me, the remarkable thing about our courtroom delays has never been that cases are getting thrown out after hitting the determined Charter limit of 30 months (for a serious crime). The shocking thing is that we ever apparently decided that 29.9 months was good enough.

Dealing with Trump is going to involve some up-front performance. But let's not forget the back end. Fixing our correctional and justice systems will help demonstrate to the Americans that Canada is a good partner. It's also a damn good idea on its own merits. Let's add it to the list, eh?

Matt Gurney is a Toronto-based journalist. He is co-editor of The Line ([ReadTheLine.ca](http://ReadTheLine.ca)), an online magazine. He can be reached at [matt@readtheline.ca](mailto:matt@readtheline.ca).

The Hill Times

# Global

Ontario Premier Doug Ford wears a 'Canada is not for sale' hat at a Jan. 15 first minister's meeting. U.S. President Donald Trump poses an existential threat to the Canadian confederation, writes Gwynne Dyer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



## Take Trump's threat to annex Canada seriously

When somebody says they are going to hurt you, it's wise to take precautions.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to impose 25-per-cent tariffs on all Canadian exports to the United States cannot be justified by the false claim that illegal immigrants and large amounts of the synthetic opioid drug fentanyl are flooding into American across the Canadian border.

The accusation about fentanyl is preposterous, since the total amount intercepted at the Canadian-U.S. border in the past year is far less than one per cent of the

amount stopped at the Mexican-U.S. border. Tariffs on Mexico might make sense as an incentive to stop the flow, perhaps, but why on Canada?

As for the alleged border-crossers, why would any migrant who is already safely in Canada (generous to asylum-seekers, gun control, universal health care, few crazies, and pretty relaxed about race) want to sneak into the U.S. (deportations, medical bankruptcies, guns everywhere, racism rampant, and 'Christian nationalists' in charge)?

There is no flow of illegal immigrants entering the U.S. from Canada. It is a fantasy. Unless Trump is simply obsessed with symmetry ('What I do on the southern border, I must also do on the northern border,') he must have some other motive for including Canada in the top three targets on his tariff hit list (Canada, Mexico, and China).

Don't get hung up on the fact that Trump is using the fentanyl problem in order to have a legal

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At some point, Canadians may even have to 'blow the bridges,' at least metaphorically.

pretext for 'emergency' action that would normally require a congressional decision. Yes, he is using it for that purpose too, but it doesn't explain why he has chosen Canada as a high-priority target.

Neither does the fact that Canada sells a lot more to the U.S. than it buys from it. Including sales of oil, gas, and electricity, Canada sells \$41-billion more to America than it buys in return—but if you exclude fossil fuels and hydropower, which involve special bilateral deals—the trade balance is \$68-billion in America's favour.

However weird and confused it may seem, therefore, Trump's frequently repeated intention to annex Canada should be taken seriously. So far he continues to say that he will achieve this exclusively by "economic pressure," and Canadians will cling to this assurance—but they should not bet the farm on it.

The reason it's hard to take the 'American threat' seriously

is because countries just don't behave like this any more. (Well, okay, Russia does, but it's the only other country to act on such an ambition, or even to express such an intention, for a very long time.) Nevertheless, Trump's intention is probably real. Just listen to how he speaks.

On Feb. 2, he wrote on Trump Social that Canada "should become our Cherished 51st State. Much lower taxes, and far better military protection for the people of Canada—AND NO TARIFFS!"

"We don't need anything they have. We have unlimited Energy, should make our own Cars, and have more Lumber than we can ever use. Without this massive subsidy, Canada ceases to exist as a viable Country."

It's a waste of time to rebut Trump's lies and distortions line by line—there's one in almost every sentence—but three things are worth noting. First, Canada's geography means that the only country that can pose a direct military threat to it is the United States. Second, there is no U.S. subsidy of any kind to the Canadian economy. And third, he really means it.

I'm certainly not suggesting that Trump has a plan for invading Canada, or even—as he claims—a step-by-step strategy for squeezing Canada economically until it gives up and surrenders its sovereignty. Neither do I think that he will necessarily succeed in his ambition. But I am saying that he poses an existential threat to the Canadian Confederation.

Why do people have such difficulty in believing this? Only 23 years ago, another American president, George W. Bush, actually invaded the wrong country. (Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, and no connection with the 9/11 attacks.)

Trump is even more ignorant than Bush, and certainly more impulsive. He has already begun the economic pressure on Canada, and Canada has already responded with like-for-like tariffs. That may be the end of it, for Trump is opening trade wars on many other fronts, as well—but when somebody says they are going to hurt you, it's wise to take precautions.

Not one Canadian in 10 would freely choose to become part of the angry and divided society to the south, but they may have to endure a long and miserable economic siege to avoid that fate. Everybody else will sympathize, but nobody else will or even can help much as Trump batters at the door.

And, at some point, Canadians may even have to "blow the bridges," at least metaphorically.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Intervention Earth: Life-Saving Ideas from the World's Climate Engineers*. Last year's book, *The Shortest History of War*, is also still available.

*The Hill Times*

# OPINION

## Singh should make up his mind, and be a leader

If the NDP leader just zipped it for a few weeks, made a new deal and committed to supporting the new prime minister until October to provide stability to deal with Trump for another nine months, then he'd look like a mature, self-sacrificing leader, his inconsistencies forgotten by election time.

Jamie Carroll

Opinion



**B**etter to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt." I can't help but think of this maxim whenever I hear NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh speak lately.



New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh holds a press conference in the Wellington Building on Jan. 22, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Surely to god we can all agree that so far 2025 is the most unpredictable, fast-changing political year in memory. U.S. President Donald Trump's executive orders (most of which will eventually be deemed unconstitutional by even his Supreme Court), his will-he-or-won't-he approach to tariffs, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's resignation, the Liberal Party's somewhat drawn-out leadership race to replace him, and on and on it goes—keeping in mind it's only the first week of February.

And yet, against this backdrop of chaos, Singh—the poorly cast holder of ultimate political power in Canada's House of Commons since 2021—has continued to make a series of absolute statements that inevitably all have the shelf life of unrefrigerated fish.

In truth, this has been going on for months: under pressure from his caucus to untangle himself from the increasingly unpopular Trudeau, Singh announced he was "tearing up" his supply-and-confidence agree-

ment with the Liberals before the House resumed last fall. Nonetheless, he proceeded to vote confidence in the government—and its supply bills—seven or eight times before Christmas.

Then, as Trudeau's pre-Christmas crisis deepened, Singh told us he was really done and—again, despite having missed the chance to do so several times including as recently as the week before—announced he would now bring down the government at the next possible opportunity.

A little inconsistent, but at least somewhat linear.

But here's where Singh lost me: in the face of the greatest economic uncertainty of his lifetime (i.e., Trump), Singh declared that no matter who the next PM/Liberal leader is, and no matter what they offered, he was out. And then he wasn't. But then he was.

As far as I can understand it, at the exact second of writing this, Singh's position is that he will vote non-confidence in any government that presents itself in the House this March, but only after he helps that government appropriate and commit to spending tens to hundreds of billions of dollars to address what *The Wall Street Journal* calls "the stupidest trade war in history."

So he trusts the Liberal government to defend Canada with hundreds of billions of dollars against this generation-defining trade war, but not to run—what—ACOA?

*Je ne comprends pas.*

And neither do lots of New Democrats whom I've spoken to. In fact, NDP MP Charlie Angus—not usually someone I'd champion as a thought leader—has gone so far as to say he doesn't give

a crap what his leader says, he's not voting to hand over the keys to the kingdom to Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre—the presumed result of a vote of non-confidence—one second sooner than necessary.

The fact is that Singh didn't have to say any of this. Had he kept his mouth shut, he would have all possible options at his disposal on March 10 when a new Liberal leader came knocking on his door.

Now, however, half of the perfectly sensible things he could have asked for will make him look even more foolish.

Notwithstanding that fact, here's is my honest advice to Singh, as a concerned Canadian: stop talking, wait to see who wins the Liberal leadership, consider where we are all collectively at vis-à-vis Trump, Poilievre, and polls at that time and be prepared to swallow yourself whole.

Ultimately, if Singh tries very hard to zip it for a few weeks, make a new deal and commit to the new PM that he would renew his support until the scheduled federal election this October—as he had originally committed to do—in order to provide stability to deal with Trump for another nine months, he would look like the mature, self-sacrificing leader in all of this, and his inconsistencies would be long forgotten by the time he hit the polls.

Surely that would be a better look for any political leader than whatever it is he's doing now.

*Jamie Carroll is a former national director of the Liberal Party of Canada who is now a (mostly) Ottawa-based consultant and entrepreneur.*

*The Hill Times*

## We need climate action, not more distraction

What we need is a government that is committed to fighting climate change, and that is prepared to table a credible—and ideally validated—climate plan that would see Canada keep its international obligations.

Keith Brooks

Opinion



**I**m a climate activist. And I'm tired of talking about carbon pricing. What we need is climate action, not more distraction.

As the Liberal leadership race heats up, and a federal election

looms, carbon pricing continues to take up a lot of oxygen.

But I don't really care about retail carbon pricing anymore. And neither should you.

Not because I don't care about climate change, or Canada's approach to it. But because the carbon tax is a distraction at this point. What we need is a government that is committed to fighting climate change, and that is prepared to table a credible—and ideally validated—climate plan that would see Canada keep its international obligations.

The climate doesn't care if that's done with the aid of a carbon tax. The wildfires don't care, either. Nor do the floods. The tax is a means to an end: reducing carbon emissions. And it's the end that matters.

For months and months, the pressure has been on Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre to say what he would do in lieu of a carbon tax. With Liberal leadership front runners now distancing themselves from consumer-facing carbon pricing, that same question needs to be put to them, and the leaders of the other parties

who have also vowed to ice the price.

We need more than simple rhymes in these most desperate of times.

Yes, there will be those who say that climate change should take a back seat to other more pressing issues today. "Affordability trumps all else right now," they argue. And Donald Trump's return as U.S. president and the threat of tariffs now need to be the focus.

But this thinking is flawed, or incomplete at least. I'll acknowledge that climate isn't the top concern for Canadians today. But as the fires in Los Angeles, the floods in Toronto this past summer, and the decimation of Jasper all remind us, climate change is an issue that demands our attention. And it's not going away.

This crisis will not resolve itself on its own. It has cost lives, and will take more. And it will take sustained coordinated actions from governments around the world—including from Canada—to slay this beast.

Party leaders and hopefuls need to have a plan to fight climate change, no matter from

which end of the political spectrum they hail. And Trump's climate denial only makes this more critical. Canada and our leaders must stand up to the disinformation machine that threatens democracy and civilization as we know it. Not kowtow to it.

This is especially so for the Liberal leadership contenders.

The party's track record on climate is patchy. They famously bought a pipeline. But they also introduced a climate accountability law, an electric vehicle sales standard, clean electricity rules, methane regulations, and the Sustainable Jobs Act. And those policies are now beginning to bend the emissions curve in the right direction. Strengthening industrial carbon pricing and finalizing the oil and gas emission cap can bend it even further.

These policies and other green industrial measures are also starting to deliver results from a cleaner economy. Clean electricity, battery assembly, and EV manufacturing are among the brightest spots in our economy, but policy certainly is essential to support these industries.

What should Canadians make of a party that turns its back on all that climate policy nine years in the making? What of the jobs lost, the factories closed, the opportunity missed?

A future Liberal Party will need to be able to credibly say that it gets climate change, and has always been serious about it. But if in a gambit to hold power, the Liberals throw their climate legacy under the bus, it's going to be hard to make that claim.

And the same goes for all parties and their leaders. The arguments in favour of climate action are stronger every day. Not only are the impacts of climate change getting worse and more apparent, but the upside of taking climate action has never been clearer.

We can't afford to sit this out, and miss out on all the jobs and investment that climate action can bring. And Trump's bluster and climate denial is a call to action, not an invitation to stand down.

*Keith Brooks is programs director for Environmental Defence Canada.*

*The Hill Times*



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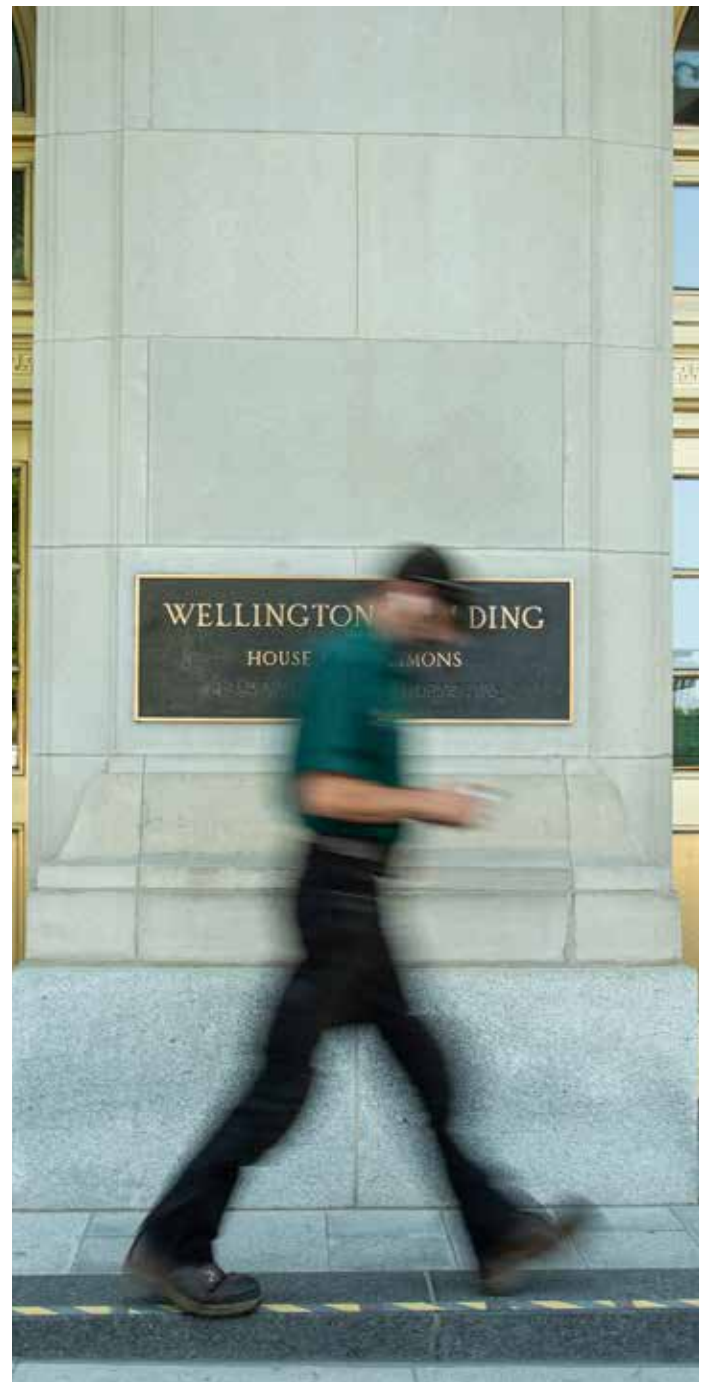
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## OPINION

## OPINION

# Canada is not equipped to defend its Arctic

The world's rules-based order is at great risk and Canada is not ready, especially in the Arctic.

Pierre Leblanc



Opinion

I have been in and out of the Canadian Arctic since 1972, when I conducted my first sovereignty foot patrol some 1,000 kilometres north of Inuvik, in the Northwest Territories. Later, I commanded the Canadian Forces Northern Area, based in Yellowknife, N.W.T., for five years. I travelled extensively in the Arctic, including Alaska and Greenland. During my retirement from the Canadian Forces, I spent two years managing the North Warning System, that line of 46 air defence radars deployed from Alaska to the south tip of Labrador. Since 2000, I have been providing independent military and policy advice on security and sovereignty in the Canadian Arctic to the defence industries and government officials from several federal and territorial departments. My experience has led me to one conclusion: at the moment, Canada is not equipped to defend its Arctic.

Global security is at its worst since I joined the Armed Forces in 1966. Russia continues its invasion of Ukraine. It has expansionist desires, and continues to be backed by North Korea and Iran. China is developing offensive weapon systems. It has promised to annex Taiwan by force, if need be, and is acting illegally in the maritime Exclusive Economic

Zones (EEZ) of Vietnam and the Philippines. The Middle East is on fire and many states are failing. All the while, access to the Canadian Arctic Archipelago is increasing with the progressive disappearance of sea ice.

U.S. President Donald Trump's musings about taking Greenland and the Panama Canal by force if need be is encouraging dictators to do the same. Since the president's comments, a Russian lawmaker has suggested that Russia should take over Svalbard which belongs to Norway, Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro is threatening to invade Puerto Rico, and China has begun patrolling the boundary of its nine-dash-line-claim, a huge part of the South China Sea.

The world's rules-based order is at great risk, and Canada is not ready, especially in the Arctic.

Since the recognition of the "peace dividend" that followed the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, most of our politicians have, to a large extent, ignored our country's national defence. For decades, we were fed a lot of good words and policy statements that seldom materialized into credible arctic defence assets, with a few exceptions such as the RADARSAT Constellation for surveillance from space, and the Arctic Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPVs).

Unfortunately, given our inefficient and politicized procurement system where political parties can cancel programs initiated by the previous government, the Canadian Forces have struggled to acquire and maintain critical defence assets. These require more than a decade to acquire given the technical complexity of the procurement system for major weapon systems. However, politicians' time horizon is set by the next election. The process to replace the CC-115 Buffalo search-and-rescue aircraft specifically designed to save Canadian



The Canadian Coast Guard Ship Louis S. St-Laurent approaches the Coast Guard Cutter Healy in the Arctic Ocean on Sept. 5, 2009. The two ships are taking part in a multi-year, multi-agency Arctic survey that will help define the Arctic continental shelf. Photograph courtesy of Patrick Kelly, U.S. Coast Guard

the Korean War. For decades, we contributed significantly to the United Nations peacekeeping missions in part to prevent a local conflict to degenerate into a war that would involve us directly. No longer. And although we did contribute importantly in Afghanistan, we are now known as a defence freeloader. We are criticized internationally for not pulling our weight.

One of the low-hanging fruits in terms of increasing our defence contribution to our allies is to join missile defence. Canada is the only NATO country not part of it. Allowing related systems on our soil will increase its collective effectiveness and raise the system's deterrence value.

Canada should consider bringing the Canadian Coast Guard back under the Department of National Defence, formally tasking it to actually guard and defend the coast along with its traditional functions.

We must also invest in defence infrastructure further north. Canadian Forces Alert needs to be reinforced. Resolute Bay, Nunavut, which is already hosting several federal facilities, is strategically located on the Northwest Passage and could be further developed as a security hub. It would support Canadian Forces and Coast Guard operations, the delivery of all federal services such as search-and-rescue and environmental response, and generate northern business opportunities. Two firms are working to establish a fibreoptic cable through the Arctic. Such a cable would further support the development of Resolute Bay. National Defence could then host our own and our allies' space assets for defence purposes such as earth observation download stations, air defence radar, communication satellites or missile defence assets.

It is clear that Canada, with our small population and relatively insignificant armed forces, cannot defend the second largest country in the world alone. We do this through alliances such as NORAD and NATO. But we cannot expect our allies to come to our help when we do not invest sufficiently in our own defence.

The Aug. 4, 2023, IPSO survey indicated that the majority of Canadians support increasing defence spending, especially when it comes to the protection of our Arctic (74 per cent). Even the Business Council of Canada has joined the call to spend more on defence. Politicians now have the popular support to do so. Will our politicians finally act to fulfill their primary responsibility, that to properly provide for the security of Canadians?

Pierre Leblanc is a retired colonel and a former commander of the Canadian Forces in the Arctic.

The Hill Times

lives took 14 long years. The long-promised Nanisivik Naval Station in Nunavut—which was announced in 2007 and has been delayed multiple times and still not fully operational—is another good example. It is nearly impossible to get politicians to invest large sums in defence capital knowing that they may not be in power to reap the political benefits. They prefer vote-buying initiatives.

At the moment, the Royal Canadian Air Force is not properly equipped to fulfill its monitoring mission, much less conduct timely interceptions in its own Canadian Air Defence Identification Zone (CADIZ). The main reason is that it doesn't have the infrastructure in our Arctic to support such long-range operations.

The CF-18 fighter aircraft are based in Cold Lake, Alta., and Bagotville, Que., respectively, some 3,500 km and over 4,000 km from the north end of the CADIZ. If forward deployed in anticipation of operations, they could operate from the Forward Operations Locations in Inuvik, N.W.T. (being repaired) and/or Iqaluit,

Nunavut, respectively, some 2,300 km and 2,200 km from the north end of the CADIZ. Given the CF-18 combat range, the distances involved and the paucity of alternate airports, the fighters would require in-flight refueling from aircraft based at the Canadian Forces Base Trenton. They would also benefit from the support of an Airborne Warning and Control System to monitor the airspace, and to coordinate combat operations. There is the possibility of using the American Pituffik Space Base in Thule, Greenland, where F-35 have been deployed in 2023. Pituffik Space Base is still some 700 km from the Canadian Forces Station Alert at the very tip of Ellesmere Island, which may some day require combat air support.

The North Warning System—that line of 46 air defence radars stretching from Alaska to the eastern tip of Labrador—is still active, but its short-range radars, based on 1970s technology, are essentially obsolete. They are, on average, located some 1,700 kilometres south from the northern tip of the CADIZ. There are federal plans to deploy one

Polar Over the Horizon Radar and one Arctic Over the Horizon Radar. When operational, they will finally monitor Canadian airspace north of the NWS line and provide NORAD with that additional critical time to assess a threat and take appropriate action. These radars will not be in operation for many years.

After long political delays, Canada is finally acquiring the F-35: a modern, reliable, and agile fighter aircraft. Another of the bright spots is that the new P-8A Poseidon long range maritime patrol aircraft will improve our anti-submarine warfare and maritime surveillance following the great service of the CP-140 Aurora. Also, the new MQ-9B long range drones presently under construction will be a great addition for monitoring the Arctic, and increase the all-important "domain awareness," which is lacking in the Canadian Arctic according to the auditor general's 2023 Report Number 6.

I find that the threat "to the Arctic" is too often minimized. Recent NORAD commanders have emphasized that the Arctic is critical for the defence of North

America. Intercontinental missiles, hypersonic cruise missiles, and hypersonic glide vehicles coming from the mainland of Russia, North Korea and China—the United States' three main adversaries—would come through the Arctic.

Apart from missiles on the CF-18 fighter aircraft, there are no land-based air defence weapons deployed anywhere in Canada to intercept those weapons, or to protect our Arctic strategic defence assets. At the beginning of hostilities, would the aggressors not try to take out Canadian Forces Station Alert, the Arctic Over the Horizon and the Polar Over the Horizon radars, or key elements of the North Warning System such as its control centre in North Bay, Ont., to blind NORAD? What do we have at the moment to protect those strategic assets and obvious targets? Those are serious threats to the Arctic.

Our Royal Canadian Navy's capabilities in the Arctic Archipelago have improved significantly with the deployment of the new Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels. Although very lightly armed, they are a physical presence on

“IT IS CLEAR THAT CANADA, WITH OUR SMALL POPULATION AND RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT ARMED FORCES, CANNOT DEFEND THE SECOND LARGEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD ALONE.”

the Arctic Ocean with a capability to call on air power if need be. The planned addition of a helicopter and towed anti-submarine suite of sensors would greatly increase their deterrence capabilities. Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee recently stated that the AOPVs have "the capacity to install other weapons in a sort of *ad hoc* manner." I am not convinced that those additional weapon systems are actually in our inventories, or are ready to be deployed. The promise of new submarines with under-ice capability is good news given our current submarines' age and inability to go safely under ice. We also need to expedite the deployment of drones to perform surveillance under the ice.

What if a group of Russian Spetsnaz special forces were to take over CFS Alert and turn the antennas around? What could we do? During my days at the Airborne Regiment, Canada could deploy and sustain a force of over 1,000 paratroopers anywhere in the Arctic within days. The Regiment's Immediate Reaction Force could be deployed within 24 hours anywhere in Canada quickly followed by the rest of the

regiment in the following days. It was another political decision that deprived Canada of this capability. Now, the Army is too small, the availability of its major equipment is significantly limited, it lacks proper Arctic mobility and communications, and it does not train often or long enough in extreme cold conditions.

As the Arctic ice disappears, I am also concerned that the Chinese illegal fishing fleets will soon eventually reach into our Exclusive Economic Zone in the Western Arctic, and deplete our natural resources. They are reported to be fishing in Vietnam's EEZ under the protection of the Chinese Coast Guard. Their illegal harvesting of fish is the central part of the Arctic is also of concern when the fishing moratorium there ends in 2037.

In the past, we contributed significantly to global security. It has been said that Canada truly became a nation through our contribution during First World War. During the Second World War, some 700,000 Canadians served in uniform out of a population of 12 million. We had the fourth largest Navy. We did our part during



## OPINION

# Trade, tariffs, and our national interest

A nation-building effort that could restore a collective sense of purpose among Canadians—dulled by the political brinksmanship of the parliamentary session—has the potential to revive the public's hope and aspirations.

Vikram  
Harper Handa

Opinion



Canada-U.S. trade and diplomatic relations have evolved significantly over the past century, influenced by domestic

politics, global political shifts, and increasing continental integration.

In 1925, U.S.-Canada trade was defined by proximity. Canada's economy was predominantly based on agriculture and raw materials, with the U.S. accounting for 39 per cent of our GDP. Despite growing ties under then-prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, protectionist policies and tariffs were prevalent, and this country's economic trajectory was still influenced by its connections to the British Empire.

By 2025, trade with the United States represents 69 per cent of our GDP, with bilateral trade becoming more diversified and encompassing energy, technology, and agriculture, while tariffs were significantly reduced through trade agreements such as the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, which replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement in 2020.

Despite the significant expansion of trade, workers in this country have seen a diminishing share of the economic gains. In 1925, 33 per cent of Canadian workers' wages were tied to trade

with the U.S. By 2025, this share had decreased to 28 per cent.

This decline signals a shift from a labour-driven economy to one increasingly dominated by capital. While profits in various sectors have soared, wages for workers—especially in manufacturing and other traditional industries—have stagnated or fallen behind. This shift is emblematic of broader trends of inequality in the global economy.

Across North America, as global capital markets have become more interconnected, corporate profits in many sectors have outpaced the median wage growth, exacerbating economic inequality. This change highlights how globalization has reshaped national economies, making them more dependent on capital flows and less on traditional manufacturing and labour-intensive industries, with significant human costs for communities.

In a world marked by globalization, every nation retains its sovereignty and the right to protect its workers while determining the standards for trade and economic activity within its borders. However, the differing

economic policies—particularly those around taxation and the protection of labour—are part of how nation-states establish standards that reflect their own values and priorities. In an age of rapid global economic integration, these policies often create tensions between national interests in a democracy and the perceived demands of international trade.

The coming wave of proposed protectionist trade measures from Washington, D.C., presents an uncertain landscape. It remains unclear what the depth of possible tariffs might be, as an act of economic nationalism or political theatre. Any genuine tax on goods will affect our bilateral trade relationship.

Canada can weather the storm of any new proposed tariffs, and the uncertainty of an economic slump by collectively defending and redefining our national interests. This response must involve all levels of government—federal, provincial, and territorial—working together, alongside organized labour, to safeguard the well-being of our communities, while employing the full range of public policy tools.

We should look to our 41 million-plus domestic market as an economic force in the east-west corridor of our Confederation. Policies that promote fair trade practices, protect our workers, and social policies that ensure equitable economic outcomes would further shield Canada from economic disruptions.

A tectonic policy realignment on the continent encompassing the movement of people, capital, and culture between Canada and the U.S. could drive significant domestic change, addressing growing frustration with material inequality. By implementing a more equitable economic model, rooted in robust public policy, a shared prosperity could be achieved in Canada. This realignment also demands an immigration policy that captures public goodwill and ensure long-term integration.

Such integration is vital for fostering a pluralist, high-trust society, ensuring that all communities can thrive and contribute to the nation's collective well-being. A nation-building effort that could restore a collective sense of purpose among Canadians—long dulled by the political brinksmanship of the current parliamentary session—has the potential to revive the public's hope and aspiration, reigniting faith in the country's future and reinvigorating the body politic.

Vikram Harper Handa is Chief Operating Officer of Maya Investments and holds a Juris Doctor in Human Rights and Constitutional Affairs from the University of British Columbia.

The Hill Times

# The next Liberal leader must do right by Palestinians

The question the government confronts today is when—not if—it will recognize a free and sovereign Palestine.

Taha  
Ghayyur

Opinion



The figure defies decency and belief.

More than 45,000 Palestinians—largely infants, children, and women—have been killed by Israel in the past 13 months.

A majority of the deaths have been sudden and violent—all victims of Israel's incessant bombing of the shattered remnants of Gaza and much of the occupied West Bank.

Still others have succumbed slowly due to sickness or starvation—a deliberate policy by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and company to deny besieged Palestinians basic human rights. The aim is to turn what remains of Palestine into dust and memory, and force Palestinians to capitulate to Netanyahu's imperial plans.

Most Canadians can see what is being done to innocents and are rightly appalled at the scope of human loss, grief, and suffering.

They want Canada to act. They want Canada to dispense with the rhetorical flim-flam in defence of the status quo. Instead, they want Canada to abide finally by the sacrosanct principles it claims to hold dear about international law and territorial integrity, and to take tangible action.

Towards that end, I am convinced that most Canadians want our government to move off the convenient sidelines and recognize the state of Palestine.

They want, as well, Canada to end—once and for all—arms sales to a nation led by an accused war criminal who, by systematic

design, is responsible for the loss, grief and suffering a horrified world has witnessed.

They want Canada to stop dithering and its unconscionable delay tactics, and join the more than 140 countries that have already recognized Palestine as a sovereign state.

Opposition MPs have made several important attempts to advance the debate around Palestinian statehood, including introducing motions in support of a “sovereign, independent, viable, democratic and territorially continuous Palestinian state, as part of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace settlement.”

True to obstinate form, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau punted the matter to the House Foreign Affairs Committee to conduct a “study.”

It is not only a distraction, but an unnecessary gambit meant to put off a decision, since Trudeau and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly had the authority and, indeed the duty, to act.

Still, the fact that the committee is even considering Pal-

estinian statehood is a significant and long-overdue signal that the momentum has indeed shifted.

The question the government confronts today is when—not if—it will recognize a free and sovereign Palestine. If Ottawa vigorously defends Ukraine's territorial integrity and right to self-determination under international law, then it has to do the same vis-à-vis Palestine. Otherwise, our country will be guilty of blatant hypocrisy.

This is not simply a political calculation. Rather, it is a legal and moral obligation rooted in Canada's commitments to uphold global justice and the multilateral conventions this nation is party to concerning human rights and humanitarian law.

The urgent corollary to a genuine commitment to Palestinian statehood is that Canada must stop arming an apartheid state.

Arms transfers to Israel of any sort, at any time, for any reason, undermine the viability of a two-state solution by perpetuating military aggression and the

grinding occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

Canada is a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty. As a result, it is legally required to ensure that the weapons it sells abroad are not used to commit war crimes. Joly claims that Canada has ceased sending lethal arms to Israel. But loopholes exist and are being exploited to deliver the tools Israel needs to wage war through intermediaries like the United States.

Canada must close those glaring gaps.

Liberal leadership candidates Frank Baylis, Karina Gould, Mark Carney, and Chrystia Freeland have all spoken out resolutely against U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to forcibly displace Palestinians in Gaza. While some have been clearer than others in their stance on Palestinian statehood, one thing is certain: recognizing a two-state solution is no longer sufficient. It is time for Canada to take the next step—to affirm Palestinians' right to self-determination and formally recognize a sovereign, independent state of Palestine.

The next Liberal leader can do right by Canadians who want to do right for Palestinians.

It's time.

Taha Ghayyur is the executive director of Justice for All Canada, a human rights and advocacy organization dedicated to preventing genocide.

The Hill Times



How could we better anticipate and manage wildfires? More generally, how could we either produce relevant new knowledge domestically from public and private sector R&D activity or, access it globally, in order to help us make better decisions in managing the impacts of key risks and challenges? *Image courtesy of Pixabay*

get better access to knowledge from academic institutions and the business sector about global trends in research, and technology development—and the likely impacts on the needs of citizens?

- **Businesses:** How could the business sector get better access to knowledge from governments about emerging global competitors or new market opportunities (for example by the trade commissioner service), or about new government research, regulatory regimes, or changing economic conditions, and from academic institutions about emerging research, or sources of skilled talent?

- **Academic institutions:** How could academic institutions get better access to knowledge from governments and the business sector, about changes to their talent requirements, or research needs for regulatory, policy, or commercial purposes?

- **Society at large:** How could the public receive better communication from governments, businesses and universities and colleges, about new services being offered to respond to their everyday needs (for example—explaining the costs and benefits of a new COVID-19 vaccine, or the safety of a new AI platform, or of new skills training in emerging technologies, etc.)?

### 3) Knowledge use and impact

After knowledge from the Knowledge Factory is accumulated, organized, mobilized and distributed to retail outlets for use, how should consumers employ it?

In all cases, the new knowledge is used for a single purpose: to contribute to making and implementing better decisions. For example, governments would use that knowledge to produce better laws, policies and programs for their citizens; businesses would use that knowledge to produce new technologies and services to meet the needs of customers. Universities and colleges would use that knowledge to produce better talent and ideas for their communities. The public would use that knowledge to make better decisions to improve their personal, family and community lives.

In conclusion, the entire \$53-billion Knowledge Factory is designed to produce a single outcome: new knowledge that improves the lives of citizens. If the new management team keeps this sole purpose in mind as they assume responsibility for the operations of the Knowledge Factory, I am sure they will find ways to reduce costs and waste, enhance relevance and performance, improve efficiency and service delivery, communicate better with suppliers and customers, and clarify to the public, the value proposition of an important national asset in need of repair.

Good luck!

*David Watters is a former assistant deputy minister for Economic Development and Corporate Finance at the Department of Finance, the founder and former CEO of the Global Advantage Consulting Group, and the founder and current president of the not-for-profit Institute for Collaborative Innovation (icicanada.org).*

*The Hill Times*

# The ‘Knowledge Factory’

Canada’s Science Technology and Innovation ecosystem is a derelict 60-year-old rusting ‘Knowledge Factory’ whose customers find its knowledge products irrelevant, costly, hard to access, and often vague about claimed benefits. New management is needed, writes former assistant deputy minister David Watters.

David Watters



Opinion

Canada’s Science Technology and Innovation Ecosystem is a derelict, 60-year-old, rusting “Knowledge Factory,” whose customers find its knowledge products to be frequently irrelevant to their needs, costly, difficult to access, and often vague

about claimed benefits. New factory management is needed to improve its weak and declining performance. This commentary is intended to provide advice to the new management team who may appear at the factory door within several months.

## What is Canada’s ‘Knowledge Factory’?

Canada’s Knowledge Factory has four key stakeholder groups—governments, universities and colleges, businesses, and domestic and foreign markets—who fund, regulate, produce, access and use new knowledge embodied in talent, text (i.e. publications) and technology. We commonly refer to this factory as Canada’s Science Technology and Innovation Ecosystem. Collectively, these stakeholders spend \$53-billion annually operating this factory.

However, this Knowledge Factory’s performance has been declining over the past two decades, currently ranks 17th among OECD nations, and second last among the G7 economies. How could its performance be improved?

## What does the Knowledge Factory do?

Canada’s Knowledge Factory provides three essential services to customers: it accumulates relevant new knowledge; it mobilizes and distributes this knowledge; and it helps customers use the knowledge to achieve results.

“ This Knowledge Factory’s performance has been declining over the past two decades, currently ranks 17th among OECD nations, and second last among the G7 economies. How could its performance be improved?

Let’s examine each of these three services in turn.

1) **Accumulating relevant new knowledge**—What new knowledge do Canadians really need? That depends on their assessment of the key economic, social, and environmental risks and challenges they will likely encounter over the next 10 years. For example, how could we better anticipate and manage wildfires? More generally, how could we either produce relevant new knowledge domestically from public and private sector R&D activity, or access it globally in order to help us make better decisions in managing the impacts of key risks and challenges?

Such challenges will include citizens’ needs for affordable housing and food, cleaner environment and energy, better health and social services, educational opportunities and sustainable employment, safe communities and national security, and economic growth.

Note that many of these challenges appear to be increasing in severity.

2) **Knowledge mobilization and distribution**—Once Canada is able to either produce the relevant knowledge we need to manage these risks, or access it from global sources (note that Canada produces only about one per cent of the world’s structured knowledge) how do we then integrate it with existing pools of knowledge, and organize it to be useful to four distinct categories of knowledge users?

- **Governments:** How could the three levels of government

## COMMENT

# Civil servants the unsung heroes steadying the ship against Trump's tariff waves

As political leaders squabble and the parliamentary systems seize up, federal bureaucrats are a stabilizing force helping weather the national crisis with well-crafted policies to counter Donald Trump's trade-related attacks.

Bhagwant Sandhu



Opinion

**O**TTAWA—With Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announcing his resignation, Parliament in prorogation, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre struggling to define a cohesive narrative for why he matters anymore, Canada's political landscape seems ripe for a freefall.

Add to that the capriciousness of U.S. President Donald Trump—his constant disparagements of Canada's sovereignty and the endless cat-and-mouse tariff game—and it's easy to see how instability and chaos could come home to roost in our country.

Yet, against the odds, we're holding steady. There's no panic in the streets. Quite the opposite: we appear united as a nation. This steadiness is mostly thanks to Trudeau and his cabinet, which, though distracted by the Liberal leadership race and broader political dysfunction, has continued to lay the groundwork for policies to weather the storm of Trump's volatility.



Union members picket the old post office on April 25, 2023. Often-overlooked, public servants have kept the country's public administration running smoothly with solid policy proposals to mitigate against shockwaves from the United States, writes Bhagwant Sandhu. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

There is, however, another group that deserves our attention: Canada's federal bureaucrats. These often-overlooked professionals have kept our public administration running smoothly, even as our political biosphere falters. They are the unsung heroes of the present moment.

Despite the antagonistic challenges posed by Trump, a framework to guide Canada's trade and diplomatic processes has been established together with proposals to tackle his irrational border security concerns. The detailed list of tit-for-tat tariff retaliations was dutifully conceived and rushed out of the gate, and there are reports that stimulus packages are being considered to support workers and businesses impacted by the tariffs should Trump actually institute them. These efforts and initiatives would be impossible without the sturdy hand and non-partisan labour of the Canadian civil service.

With the nation's attention fixated on the turmoil caused by Trump, an election triggered in

“  
PIERRE POILIEVRE'S  
CALLS TO  
DISMANTLE PUBLIC  
INSTITUTIONS, CUT  
PROGRAMS, AND  
FIRE FEDERAL  
OFFICIALS  
HIGHLIGHT A  
WORRYING LACK  
OF UNDERSTANDING  
ABOUT THE ROLE  
OF GOVERNMENT IN  
TURBULENT TIMES.

Ontario—our biggest province—and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's reluctance join a unified position against the United States, it's the public servants who are ensuring that solid policy proposals are chosen to help mitigate the effects of any surprises and shockwaves.

Throughout the political maelstrom of heightened partisanship with politicians like Poilievre trading barbs on social media, our public-sector workers have adhered to the impartial ethos of their profession. Away from the public eye, they are drafting plans and implementing strategies to ensure the machinery of government stays operational, and our democratic cultural values are upheld amid the American onslaught.

When governments are in disarray, it is normally the opposition parties that step up to fill the gap with alternative policy tracks. Poilievre, however, has offered no practical direction. His demands to recall Parliament sound self-serving, and his rhetoric—filled with predictable slogans

and calls for tax cuts—are without any clear, actionable solutions to navigate the crisis.

In contrast, Trudeau's last weeks in office are proving to be surprisingly pragmatic. Without the pressure to score political points or showcase his celebrity for the cameras, the outgoing prime minister has diligently forged a national consensus. Though his legacy is subject to debate, there is no denying that he remains alert and intellectually engaged in the current process, in spite of the tensions with Poilievre and the media's focus on the Liberal leadership race.

This underscores a larger lesson: when the spotlight fades, and the political theatre is over, it is the calm, conscientious hard work that gets results. Trudeau's presence, though low-key, has been essential in presenting a unified front against Trump. Moreover, his focus on the issues rather than spectacle is helping preserve our national purpose, and provoke patriotism.

Trudeau's erstwhile enemies—Poilievre and Smith—seem more preoccupied with posturing than policy, ingratiating towards Trump and his selfish sidekick and proto-fascist Elon Musk. Poilievre's decision to employ simplistic and one-dimensional approaches of lobbyist-like conduct to protect the oil sands is failing to address the tariffs' complexities. His constant calls to dismantle public institutions, cut programs, and fire federal officials only stand to highlight a worrying lack of understanding about the role of government during turbulent times.

Thankfully, what could have been a period of public confusion and catastrophe is turning into an unlikely case study in the federal public service's resilience. As political leaders squabble, and parliamentary systems seize up, the public service is emerging as a stabilizing force with well-crafted policy and programs to counter Trump's temperaments.

As the distracting noise of political bickering cranks up, it will be the dedication of government workers, free from partisan interests, that will keep the country grounded. It's time we stopped bashing the bureaucrats and showed them the respect they deserve.

*Bhagwant Sandhu is a retired director general from the federal public service. He has also held executive positions with the governments of Ontario and British Columbia.*

*The Hill Times*



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's last weeks in office are proving to be surprisingly pragmatic, writes Sandhu. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has offered no practical direction as Canada responds to America's trade threats, writes Sandhu. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Prolonged Trump-triggered surge in Canadian patriotism may move electoral needle, say pollsters

Whether this is a fleeting moment or the beginning of a wave of Canadian nationalism—something on which federal politicians or parties could capitalize—depends on how long it lasts, says Shachi Kurl.

BY IREM KOCA

U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff and annexation threats towards Canada are triggering an unusual nationalistic surge, shifting public sentiment in ways that—if it endures—could define this year's federal election, say pollsters.

Canadians have been rattled over the past month by what *The Wall Street Journal* has called “the dumbest trade war in history” as Trump announced—then delayed—a 25-per-cent tariff on Canadian goods.

Some have been calling for a boycott of American products on social media, circulating lists of Canadian alternatives, and urging consumers to “Buy Canadian.” Some liquor and grocery stores have replaced American goods with domestic options, while social media users have rallied around hashtags such as #CanadaIsNotForSale. The sentiment was on full display in the days following the Feb. 1 executive order on the tariffs in Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver where Canadian sports fans booed and jeered during the singing of the American anthem.

## Poll show patriotic surge amongst Canadians

Feb. 5 data from the Angus Reid Institute shows a 10-point jump in the number of Canadians who say they are “very proud” of their country compared to two months ago. Similarly the number of Canadians who say they have a “deep emotional attachment” to their country has risen by 10 percentage points to 59 per cent. The proportion who say they would like to see Canada join the United States has dropped from six per cent to four per cent over the same period.

The poll also notes that the amount of attention paid to this issue is close to that of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ninety per cent of Canadians say they are following this issue closely, with



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, Liberal leadership candidates Mark Carney and Chrystia Freeland, and U.S. President Donald Trump. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia, and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. *The Hill Times* illustration by Neena Singhal

more than half saying they are following it “very closely.” Ninety-one per cent of Canadians want to see the country’s reliance on the U.S. reduced, while 59 per cent want to see bilateral relations repaired. Three per cent of Canadians polled said they fear immediate job loss.

Shachi Kurl, president of the Angus Reid Institute, said Canadians are undoubtedly united in their “apoplexy towards the Trump White House” in response to the tariff threats.

While there’s “a collective sigh of relief that spans the political spectrum” with the temporary reprieve issued on Feb. 4, there is also the sense that “this could have been dealt with over a civilized negotiation rather than the belligerent, bellicose volatility introduced by Trump,” Kurl noted.

Whether this is a fleeting moment or the beginning of a surge in Canadian nationalism—something on which federal politicians or parties could capitalize—depends on how long the sentiment lasts, Kurl said.

Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, agreed.

“Do I think a new political movement has emerged from this, or anything of that nature? There’s no evidence of that right now. Could it affect the next election? Absolutely. If this continues on, it’ll become the No. 1 issue,” said Bricker.

## Canadians still concerned about their future

Trump’s tariff threats have reinforced and reshaped Canadian nationalism by casting the U.S. as a strong external threat, a

If the Canada-U.S. tensions persist, so, too, would the domestic debate over which Canadian leader or political party is best equipped to manage Trump’s unpredictability.

Former deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) is looking to draw support by citing her role in renegotiating NAFTA as a key strength, while former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney is leaning on his experience steering economies through crises, including the 2008 downturn, and Brexit during his tenure with the Bank of England, Bricker noted.

“Some sort of a nationalistic perspective” could gain prominence in the campaign of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) as he is positioning himself as a champion of a “Canada-first” approach, according to Bricker.

However, it is difficult to gauge whose narrative will resonate most with the public, he noted, adding that Carney and Freeland may struggle to get public attention at the same level as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) who—as the head of government—is still at the centre of it all.

Frank Graves, president of Ekos Research, said his research has shown a rise in “identification with the country,” which he highlighted comes with “a very significant decline” over the last few weeks in support for Poilievre’s Conservatives.

“The effects have been pretty dramatic. I think the response to the announcements of tariffs, and also to the scuttlebutt about annexation has really alarmed a lot of Canadians, and stirred up what have been pretty dormant national identity concerns, [and] sovereignty concerns. It’s a fairly big deal,” Graves said.

Graves argued that Poilievre has been caught “flat-footed,” and that he “missed the new salient issue” of how to respond to Trump’s tariff threats and messaging around annexing Canada as the 51<sup>st</sup> state. According to Graves, Poilievre “didn’t pivot very well,” which is reflected in the narrowing of Conservatives’ lead over Liberals over the past month.

Recent polls suggest the race between the Conservatives and Liberals is tightening, due to multiple factors.

A Jan. 29 Ekos poll suggested that the Conservatives held 35.7 per cent of voter support, followed by the Liberals at 32.7 per cent, the NDP at 13.1 per cent, and the Greens at 4.9 per cent. A Nanos Research poll released on Feb. 4 has the Conservatives at 41.6 per cent, followed by the Liberals at 26.2 per cent, the NDP at 17.3 per cent, and the Greens at 5.5 per cent.

“[Poilievre’s] got to come up with a whole new framing. It’s not going to be an election about how bad Trudeau and carbon taxes were. It’s going to be ‘how do we confront and deal with a very different kind of American administration’ which doesn’t even look like the original Trump administration, and which many Canadians are finding threatening and disturbing,” Graves said.

## Will the nationalist ‘moment’ last?

Domestic Canadian politics were “quite fractious” during Trump’s first term in the White House, and during those four years between 2017 and 2021, “the antipathy towards Trump did not lead to a great linking-arms moment that held for a significant period of time,” said Kurl.

“This may be different. It may not be. We’ll see. Is it a moment? Absolutely. We are experiencing a historic moment. Will the moment last? Convert into a movement? We don’t know,” she said.

Bricker said the last time the notion of Canadian nationalism played a big role in a federal election was in 1988, when then-Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney negotiated a free trade agreement with the U.S., which was opposed by the Liberal Party, then led by John Turner, warning it would threaten Canadian sovereignty, economic independence, and cost many people their jobs. Despite the criticism of the deal and anti-U.S. rhetoric at the time, Mulroney won the election, and the agreement led to the eventual creation of NAFTA.

“We had a very policy-oriented election [in 1988], in which people were thinking about the future of the country when casting their ballot, and deciding which politician they should trust. I expect you’re going to see a similar thing here,” Bricker said.

However, there is a key difference, which is that “there were very clearly two different approaches” in the ‘80s, whereas on the issue of tariffs today, there appears to be broad consensus across parties.

“I don’t know that there’s a lot Poilievre is saying that Carney or Freeland would disagree with,” Bricker said, adding that while nationalism sparked debate in 1988, it did not decide the election.

Practical considerations could ultimately “undermine” that unity, Kurl highlighted. “It sounds great—until it doesn’t,” she said. “It might be unaffordable [to buy only Canadian], or our supply chains may be so deeply intertwined that even when you think you’re buying Canadian, are you really?”

Still, it is “an indelible, baked-in part of the narrative” of the next federal election, and could be “the” ballot question, or it could be overtaken by the impetus for change and shifting domestic politics, Kurl said, adding that: “It’s so hard to know—with a president as volatile, unpredictable and whiplash-inducing as Donald Trump—where we’ll be by the time the federal writs are dropped.”

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The Hill Times

## NEWS

# Trump's tariffs could require pandemic-style public service mobilization, say observers

Trump's month-long delay pushes talks closer to the date of the Liberal leadership contest, the end to prorogation, and a potential federal election.

Continued from page 1

with the exception of energy products, which would be subject to a 10-per-cent tariff—starting Feb. 4. Following phone calls with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, Trump said the tariff implementation against both countries' goods would be delayed by 30 days.

If Trump keeps his word, that would move the tariff implementation date to March 6, just three days before the Liberal Party is due to elect a new leader, and Trudeau is set to resign as prime minister. Parliament is prorogued until March 24, but *The Hill Times* has reported that some Liberals want an election to be called before the House returns.

Even if the new Liberal leader were to hold off on an election, the Conservative, Bloc Québécois, and New Democrat leaders have declared plans to move a non-confidence motion against the government in the House as soon as possible after prorogation ends. If the motion succeeds, an election campaign of 35 to 50 days would be triggered, during which the government would enter caretaker mode.

Julian Karaguesian, a former special adviser in Finance Canada's international trade and finance branch, said part of the problem was that the country was already dealing with multiple challenges, including climate change, geopolitical crises, and global instability.

"We're facing a very real threat from the person who sits in the White House in Washington, and it's not an existential threat, but it's a very powerful threat to our prosperity," said Karaguesian, who is a currently a course lecturer at McGill University's Department of Economic. "It's not this mysterious threat from the People's Republic of China. It's coming from the country that we've spent the last 75 years engaging in deep integration with. So regardless the depth that our civil service has, and it does have that, I don't think anybody was really prepared—even from



Canada is 'fortunate' to have Clerk of the Privy Council John Hannaford, pictured, and his background as a 'former trade deputy minister and experienced Washington hand,' says former PCO clerk Michael Wernick. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the first Trump presidency—for this kind of uncertainty, because we're dealing with a president whose modus operandi seems to be to create uncertainty."

Karaguesian said Canada benefitted from the depoliticized public service inherited from the U.K., rather than the political appointments-based system in the U.S.

"You have quite a deep layer of deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers that won't be looking for jobs right now. They can continue working without the added concern that in a few months, they may need to find a new job. So that helps continuity," he said.

Turnbull, who was on secondment to the Privy Council Office between 2015 and 2017, said that with Parliament prorogued, work in the public service's senior ranks is likely to be more streamlined.

"Nobody's making MCs [memoranda to cabinet] right now that are going to be turned into legislation," she said. "People are still going to be putting things before cabinet, but cabinet is the decision-making body right now, and they're doing what they can without having to go to Parliament. There's going to be a big focus on the ministers that are part of the Canada-U.S. focus, and not so much emphasis on other line department issues that are not immediately affected by this."

If the tariffs do take effect, Turnbull likened the situation to that in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic response, when ministers, political staff, departments, deputy ministers, and other senior civil servants mobilized to co-ordinate an emergency response. Any major funding packages for tariff relief, however, would require the return of Parliament.

"Depending on what happens, [Parliament] might vote on a big package, and the NDP might agree to let the government keep going for a while, or the government might be defeated, and then they're in an election," she said. "So if I were a public servant right now, I would be thinking, 'Won't earth are we going to do if we are going back and forth with Donald Trump, and he's threatening tariffs, but we're not sure yet, and we have a caretaker government and an election going on?' That is going to be really difficult."

Michael Wernick, who was clerk of the Privy Council between 2016 and 2019, also likened the current tariff standoff to the early pandemic in 2020, "which was an all-consuming point of focus and no-one could be sure what was going to happen next," he said in an email to *The Hill Times*.

As for any concerns about the caretaker period, Wernick said the convention permits the government to do what it thinks necessary "using the laws and tools in place and provides for consulting with the opposition leaders."

He pointed to late 2015 as an example, when Parliament did not sit between June and that year's federal election in November.

"[Then-prime minister] Stephen Harper was directing TPP negotiators and dealing with the Syrian migration and ISIS," during that time, Wernick said.

"The only complication during the writ period is the inability to pass a brand new law," he said, while also noting that neither the Employment Insurance system nor the Bank of Canada would be affected during an election campaign period. The Business Development Bank of Canada, and Export Development Canada could also lend during that period.

## Public Safety, Finance, GAC keeping busy

In the meantime, the public service has already been tasked with implementing a range of measures announced in response to Trump's tariff threat since he first announced his intentions in November 2024.

On Dec. 17, the federal government announced a \$1.3-billion "border plan," which would fund the training of drug detection dog teams at the Canada Border Services Agency, the creation of a drug profiling centre and chemical precursor risk management unit at Health Canada, and a new RCMP task force equipped with helicopters, drones, and mobile surveillance towers near the border.

On Feb. 3, the day before tariffs were due to take effect, Trudeau repeated the December announcement to Trump, alongside other commitments related to fentanyl smuggling and cartels. The implementation of the tariffs was paused for 30 days as a result.

Public Safety Minister David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Ont.) elaborated on the new promises at a press conference in Emerson, Man., on Feb. 4. That included the listing of cartels affecting Canada as terrorist entities under the Criminal Code; a binational task force against organized crime, fentanyl, and money laundering; round-the-clock surveillance of the border; a new intelligence directive on organized crime and fentanyl, available through a \$200-million investment; and the appointment of a "fentanyl czar."

"What was our objective yesterday? Stop the tariffs. What's our objective today? Stop the tariffs. What's our objective tomorrow? Stop the tariffs," McGuinty said.

If the tariffs do come into effect, the Canadian government plans to impose retaliatory 25-per-cent tariffs on \$30-billion in imported goods from America. Ahead of the expected Feb. 4 tariff implementation, Finance Canada officials published 1,256 tariff items that would immediately be subject to any retaliatory measures on Feb. 2. Another \$125-billion in imported U.S. goods would also be subject to tariffs, following a 21-day public comment period.

CBC News reported on Feb. 4 that Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) asked his fellow ministers for initiatives related to the Canada-U.S. relationship that can be deployed in a spring budget.

Turnbull and Wernick both said Privy Council Clerk John

Hannaford was a good choice to lead the public service through the current crisis, with Wernick stating that the country is "fortunate to have a Clerk today who is a former trade deputy minister and experienced Washington hand."

Hannaford was a foreign and defence policy adviser to the prime minister between 2015 and 2019, deputy minister of International Trade between 2019 and 2022, and deputy minister of Natural Resources between 2022 and 2023.

Turnbull said key departments working on the tariff issue would be the Privy Council Office (PCO), Finance, Global Affairs, and Public Safety.

"They're the ones that would have to make the specific changes to implement what the prime minister is promising to do in the back and forth with Trump, and so if there are going to be changes to the border, there's going to be more people deployed, Public Safety is going to have to figure that out, along with GAC, along with Finance," she said. "If they're going to create a fentanyl czar, that's going to be for PCO to figure out exactly what the terms of that appointment are going to look like."

"There's going to be a lot of support for the ministers in terms of research, making sure they've got their facts in terms of what they need to know in these negotiations and what we can promise."

Karaguesian, who spent time working at Canada's embassy in Washington, D.C., said the employees of that institution were also critical during this period.

"Before I went down to work in our embassy in Washington, I was told by a senior member of the government, this is one of the fourth pillars of the government. It's not just an embassy. It's like one of the core ministries," he said. "They must be going full tilt now, just non-stop in terms of advocacy, in terms of assessment, in terms of speaking with contacts, getting to know the government, trying to find out what the intentions of the president are."

Prior to the tariff pause, three federal public sector unions released a joint statement condemning Trump's plans "and their devastating impact on Canadian jobs, families, and businesses."

The 70,000-member Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, 25,000-member Canadian Association of Public Employees, and 6,000-member Association of Canadian Financial Officers said on Feb. 1 that their members, "and all federal public sector workers, have a long history of stepping up in times of crisis—whether during the COVID-19 pandemic or other national challenges."

"This moment is no different. Our members will continue to deliver the critical programs and services Canadians rely on, ensuring that no one is left behind."

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# Manufacturing sector and others lobbying hard for federal government support during 30-day tariff pause

Investments are frozen and long-term planning decisions are largely on hold in the manufacturing sector ‘as everybody tries to figure out where this is going to go,’ said a vice-president of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.



On Feb. 3, U.S. President Donald Trump, left, agreed to put a 30-day pause on tariffs against Canada. In a social media post Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada would take measures intended stop the flow of fentanyl across the border. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A looming threat of economic freefall because of possible American tariffs has brought about a shift in lobbying as Canada’s manufacturers and other business sectors either ramp up or adjust their advocacy messages to call for federal government actions to help weather the crisis.

“Manufacturing will be hit hardest by any tariff scenario,” said Ryan Greer, vice-president of public affairs and national policy for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME). “All of our internal work and resources, and most of our work [in] advocacy, lobbying, or anything else with the government, has shifted towards this.”

On Feb. 3, U.S. President Donald Trump agreed to put a 30-day pause on tariffs against Canada—25-per-cent on all imported Canadian goods, with a reduced rate of 10 per cent for energy—which were previously announced to come into effect on Feb. 4. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) posted on X on Feb. 3 that a deal was reached after a “good call” with the American president, and stated that Canada would take measures intended stop the flow of fentanyl across the border, although many of these measures had already been announced in December as part of Ottawa’s \$1.3-billion border plan.

In a Truth Social post, Trump confirmed the tariffs’ delay “for a 30-day period to see whether or not a final economic deal with Canada can be structured.”

Greer told *The Hill Times* that the tariff threat is the most urgent

issue facing the CME, and that his organization will be having “a very urgent, proactive discussion” with the federal government about how best to use the 30-day reprieve. He said uncertainty still hangs over the heads of the manufacturing sector.

“The investment is frozen up. Long-term planning decisions, capital investments, all of those things are on hold for the most part in the sector as everybody tries to figure out where this is going to go,” he said.

“We’ve been wanting [the federal government] to think through what some short-term measures could be to basically buy manufacturers time if these tariffs are imposed, so that we can prevent some of these rapid relocations and major job losses while we negotiate and try to eliminate it.”

Alan Arcand, the CME’s chief economist, shared data with *The Hill Times* by email regarding the potential economic effects of Trump’s tariffs, which were based on Statistics Canada’s 2022 national symmetric input-output tables.

According to Arcand, the peak impact of U.S. tariffs would reduce Canada’s GDP by 3.1 per cent, compared to the base case of no tariffs. Arcand said in the email that “manufacturing is hit hardest” with output dropping to 8.8 per cent below the base case.

“This sharp decline stems from the sector’s heavy reliance on U.S. trade—manufactured goods make up approximately two-thirds of Canada’s merchan-

dise exports to the U.S., and U.S. demand accounts for about 45 per cent of the sector’s total sales,” said Arcand in the email.

Dan Kelly, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), told *The Hill Times* that “we have enough uncertainty around the tariff issue that we can’t control.” He said the CFIB is trying to make certain the federal government doesn’t lose sight of the potential impact of a tariff war on small- and medium-sized enterprises as the one-month pause draws to a close.

“When people think about tariffs, they think about the large exporters, of attention being paid to the oil and gas sector, of attention being paid to the automotive sector—understandably, as it should. But 16 per cent of small businesses directly export to the U.S.,” said Kelly. “An even greater impact is felt by small businesses [from] Canada’s retaliatory tariffs. Half of small businesses, 49 per cent, import directly from the United States. And so ... even the initial round of retaliatory tariffs that were proposed would have just broadsided huge swaths of Canada’s small business community.”

Kelly said the CFIB is calling on the federal government to be very careful in the application of possible retaliatory tariffs.

“We obviously recognize that Canada has to respond, so we’re not trying to talk them out of that, but we want them to do that with

care and precision and not in any kind of emotional way,” he said.

François Desmarais, vice-president of trade and industry affairs for the Canadian Steel Producers Association, told *The Hill Times* that, under the threat of tariffs, he’s seen a shift, with the feds reaching out to his organization for input instead of his group needing to reach out to them.

“Federal government bureaucrats in different departments are reaching out to different industries—not just us—to seek our input and opinion on the current situation,” he said. “Instead of knocking at their door, they’re the ones calling us. This is different, unusual. They’re definitely looking at understanding how we see the situation and what we think should be Canada’s response.”

Desmarais said the Canadian Steel Producers Association has been encouraging Ottawa to be prepared to retaliate against any “unjust tariffs.”

“We understand there’s going to be consultation in next few days for product-for-product retaliation, and we’re also looking at what the government can do to either sustain our industry while we negotiate our way out of this tariff situation, but also ways to make us competitive in our own domestic market,” he said.

Desmarais said the current tariff threats brings back memories of 2018, when 25-per-cent tariffs were imposed by the U.S. on steel imports from most countries, including Canada. However, “this is uncharted territory,” he said.

“Back in 2018-2019, it was steel that was directly targeted by tariffs. Now we’re talking about for customers and downstream partners in various industries, so it’s going to be amplified by a lot,” he said. “Most of our producers are importing their inputs from the U.S.—talking about iron ore ... to melt it and then to send it to the automotive, energy industry, [and] construction sector in the U.S. All this back and forth will have a spiralling effect, which will make 2018-2019 pale in comparison.”

Kyle Larkin, executive director of the Grain Growers of Canada, told *The Hill Times* that his group is planning a trip to Washington, D.C., in April or May to meet with members of Congress and other officials to make sure they understand the importance of Canadian grain and grain products.

“We’ll be sharing a bunch of information, and showing them how much they import from Canada versus other countries,” he said. “American consumers need food. They need to buy bread, they need to buy oatmeal, they need to buy canola oil. That’s the message that we’re delivering. It has to do with their domestic food security, but also the prices that American consumers enjoy at the grocery store.”

In regard to a possible trade war, Larkin said that “hitting back with retaliatory tariffs is needed,” but added that the federal government needs to ensure such action has the least amount of impact on Canadians and this country’s grain farmers.

Most agriculture equipment, such as combines and tractors, is manufactured in the U.S., according to Larkin.

“A 25-per-cent retaliatory tariff on that ... will impact Canadian grain farmers, many of whom update their equipment on a regular basis. That’s one thing we’re conscious of and need to understand more,” he said.

Tabatha Bull, president and CEO of the Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB), and a member of Trudeau’s Council on Canada-U.S. Relations, said that tariffs would disproportionately impact Indigenous businesses, workers and communities, in a CCIB press release on Feb. 6.

On average, 19 per cent of revenues of Indigenous businesses that export come from the U.S., and revenues generated from exports to the U.S. by Indigenous businesses reach as high as 90 per cent for some, according to the CCIB press release.

According to the press release, Indigenous people and businesses play a vital role in the Canadian economy, particularly in sectors that are likely to be significantly impacted, such as those that are natural resource-based or export reliant.

The Council on Canada-U.S. Relations also held a Canada-U.S. Economic Summit in Toronto on Feb. 7, intended to gather leaders in trade, business, public policy, and organized labour to discuss how to “build a long-term prosperity agenda for Canada” during the 30-day tariff pause, according to a Feb. 5 press release from the Prime Minister’s Office.

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*The Hill Times*

## NEWS

# Some Ontario Progressive Conservatives urging federal Conservatives to pause door-knocking until provincial campaign ends

But nominated federal candidates and senior Conservatives say they have no plans to 'put down tools.'

BY ABBAS RANA

Some Ontario Progressive Conservatives are urging federal Conservative candidates to pause door-knocking during the ongoing provincial campaign, citing voter confusion and the added strain of an election taking place in the middle of winter.

"In Ontario, the direction the federal party is giving is that canvassing can continue despite the provincial election," said one Ontario Progressive Conservative who is helping provincial campaigns, and who did not want to be identified because they were not authorized to speak to the media. "Only blackout days are advance polls and election day. This is frustrating some folks on the provincial side—understandably—given that this is bound to create confusion at the doors."

The federal Conservative Party's communications office did not respond to comment requests from *The Hill Times*.

Despite holding a strong majority in the Ontario legislature, Premier Doug Ford triggered an election 15 months ahead of schedule. Originally set for June 2026, the provincial election was called on Jan. 29 and will take place on Feb. 27. Advance polling will be available between Feb. 20-22.

In interviews with *The Hill Times*, Ontario PC campaign workers in seven ridings said that simultaneous campaigning by federal Conservative candidates is jeopardizing their voter support. They argued that receiving visits from four provincial candidates, followed by a fifth from the federal party, is "overload" for voters.

"It's an overload for [people who are saying], 'Oh my gosh, just saw four provincial candidates at my door, the Greens, the NDP, the Liberals and another Tory, now



Ontario Premier Doug Ford, left, and federal Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. Some Ontario Progressive Conservatives are calling on their federal cousins to halt their door-knocking until the provincial campaign is over on Feb. 27. But the federal Conservatives say they have no plans of pausing their outreach to voters. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

you are Tory and you're from the federal side,'" said a second PC campaign staffer, who did not want to be identified.

"Clearly, there's some confusion at doors. Understandably, people get a bit tired, residents get tired of hearing from everyone. It's the right thing to do to pause any federal door knocking until the provincial election is over."

A third PC campaign staffer said that provincial candidates, when out door-knocking, introduce themselves, inform voters that the election is on Feb. 27, and ask for their support. In contrast, federal candidates introduce themselves but clarify that the election has not yet been called while still seeking voter support. This difference in messaging, he noted, can create confusion among voters.

"When the federal candidate goes [canvassing], people ask 'When are we voting?' and the candidate says, 'It's not confirmed yet,'" said the campaign staffer. "People say, 'There's no vote [date]? So, what's this campaign about?'"

Federal nominated candidates interviewed for this article said that they have no plans of pausing their campaign until the provincial election is over. They argued that the next federal election could be called anytime, so they have to be prepared.

"We've been doing it for months, what do they want?" said a federal Conservative nominated

candidate who was door knocking when *The Hill Times* reached out to them on the phone. "Doug didn't have to call an election, he's got a majority mandate. So, they called an election, it is what it is. We're not going to stop canvassing. We're at the doors every day. I'm at the door right now. They can be upset about this, but that's on them."

This candidate said that they can make the same argument against provincial Tories for calling this election when they didn't have to.

"They can't be upset with what we're doing," said the candidate. "We can say the same thing. Why are they interfering when we're campaigning?"

A senior Conservative interviewed for this article acknowledged that federal and provincial conservative candidates are campaigning simultaneously, which has caused frustration among some provincial counterparts. He noted that the decision to pause federal candidates' campaigns ultimately rests with the party leader.

"We have not put down tools, yet," said the source. "It's clear our candidates are canvassing right now."

In his election call, Ford argued that he needs a fresh mandate to address U.S. President Donald Trump's threatened 25-per-cent tariffs on Canadian imports, which could kill hundreds of thousands of Ontario

jobs and potentially trigger a recession. He claimed that a new mandate would allow him to implement a multi-billion-dollar bailout package to support affected workers and industries.

However, critics suggest the real reason for the early election is to pre-empt an ongoing RCMP investigation into the Greenbelt scandal, which could lead to indictments of top provincial officials. In this scandal, some provincial government officials are accused of allowing developers to build homes on protected Greenbelt land, significantly inflating its value. After the controversy became public, Ford scrapped the plan, but the Mounties continue to investigate potential corruption.

Some federal Conservatives said they believe Ford called the election because of a historical trend where Ontarians tend to elect a provincial government of one party while choosing a different party at the federal level. The federal Conservatives worry that once the provincial campaign ends on Feb. 27, the Liberals may call a federal vote soon after electing their new leader on March 9.

Former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor Mark Carney is the front-runner in the Liberal leadership race, and some of his top advisers are advocating for an early election. If this happens, party volunteers could face exhaustion from managing two major election campaigns back to back.

The federal Conservatives currently hold a strong double-digit lead in the polls. According to seat projections by 338Canada.com, a polling aggregate website, if an election were to happen now, the Conservatives could get 220 seats, the Liberals 63, Bloc Québécois 44, the NDP 15, and the Greens one.

The federal Conservatives began nominating candidates months ago, and many have been actively door-knocking since. Some are so confident in their chances of winning the next federal election that they are already discussing where they will live in Ottawa after being elected—debating the pros and cons of staying in a hotel, renting an apartment, or buying a home.

In recent weeks, federal party officials have been meeting with nominated candidates to assess election readiness. They have reviewed fundraising efforts, door-knocking activities, campaign office searches, and election signage while identifying any gaps that need to be addressed.

The party has also been circulating lists of top door-knockers across different regions to foster competition among candidates. Additionally, candidates are being reminded to stay prepared as an election could be called at any time.

This week, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) will hold a special national caucus meeting on Parliament Hill on Feb. 14, followed by a major speech at the Rogers Centre in Ottawa on Feb. 15. Notices sent to MPs and staff provided no explanation for the mid-February caucus meeting, especially given that the House is prorogued until March 24.

Conservative sources told *The Hill Times* that the meeting is necessary as the caucus has not met since the House adjourned in mid-December for the winter break. They noted that the political landscape has shifted significantly, making this an opportune moment for a reset. With Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) stepping down on March 9 and the Liberals engaged in a leadership race, along with U.S. President Donald Trump's threatened tariffs dominating the political agenda, the timing of the meeting is seen as strategic.

The Conservatives are promoting the Feb. 15 event as the "Canada First Rally with Pierre Poilievre." Invitations have been extended to caucus members, Hill staff, and local party members, with attendees encouraged to "wear red and white in honour of our nation's flag!"

Party insiders suggest that, until recently, the Conservatives had been preparing to campaign against Trudeau, with a primary focus on the carbon tax. However, with Trudeau stepping down and leadership front-runners signaling their intent to scrap the tax, the party now faces the challenge of reframing its campaign strategy. Poilievre is expected to outline this new vision in his speech at the rally, according to Conservative sources.

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# Efficiency reviews, higher CAF salaries, procurement czars: Liberal leadership hopefuls' public service promises



Liberal leadership candidates Mark Carney, left, Chrystia Freeland, Karina Gould, Frank Baylis, and Ruby Dhalla. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, Jake Wright, and handouts

Reaching two per cent of GDP on defence spending is a priority for some candidates, while others look to federal office space and counter-measures to U.S. tariffs.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Depending on the outcome of the Liberal leadership race, public servants could find themselves subject to spending and efficiency reviews, answering to fewer ministers, or processing major housing projects, according to the promises made so far on the intra-party campaign trail.

*The Hill Times* reached out to the campaign teams of Liberal leadership contenders Frank Baylis, Mark Carney, Ruby Dhalla, Chrystia Freeland (University—Rosedale, Ont.), and Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) to ask about their plans for the public service, and whether they would differ from the Liberal Party's current policies.

Freeland and Gould's teams did not respond by press time, while Baylis held a press conference about plans to adjust Parliament and shift defence procurement policies on Feb. 6. Dhalla and Carney's teams sent emailed responses.

## Promises and delivery

Under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), the

core public service population has increased by approximately 85,000 people—from 197,354 in March 2016 to 282,152 in March 2024—according to Treasury Board statistics.

Alongside vaccination requirements for government employees during a campaign at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Liberal Party's 2021 election platform included measures aimed at improving diversity within the public service.

The party promised a fellowship for 1,000 students and new graduates, French-language training to third- and fourth-year students to increase the pool of potential candidates, expand the public service recruitment program to international students and permanent residents, and establish a mental health fund for Black civil servants.

The platform also included a commitment to integrate human rights, environment, social and corporate governance principles, and supply chain transparency principles into federal procurement policies.

Trudeau's only set of mandate letters this term, issued on Dec. 16, 2021, tasked then-Treasury Board president Mona Fortier (Ottawa-Vanier, Ont.) with measures to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion practices within the public service, including those promised in the election manifesto.

Fortier was also asked to work with the Privy Council clerk and unions on a "a coherent and coordinated plan for the future of work within the public service, including developing flexible and equitable working arrangements," reduce the time taken to hire new public servants, and develop a

long-term, government-wide public service skills strategy.

More than three years and two Treasury Board presidents later, the government's priorities have changed to public service cuts and a reduction in pandemic-era remote work opportunities for public servants.

The 2024 budget included a plan to cut the public service by 5,000 jobs—approximately 1.3 per cent of the total—over four years. More recently, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced on Jan. 20 that the department plans to cut 3,300 positions over the next three years.

Meanwhile, employees in the core public service have been required to work from the office for at least three days per week since September 2024, prompting protests from unions and concerns about inadequate office space.

## What the candidates say

In an emailed statement, Dhalla said, if she were to win the leadership contest, existing policies would be assessed and refined in areas such as staffing and office space.

"Canada's comeback starts now, and as prime minister, I am committed to ensuring that all members of the workforce, not just those in the public sector, feel valued," the statement said. "It is essential to assess and refine existing policies from the previous administration to ensure they serve the best interests of all Canadians. This includes examining staffing levels, using federal office space, and other key areas to modernize and strengthen the labour force for the future."

Emily Williams, spokesperson for the Carney campaign, told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement that the former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor would "be sharing more about his plan for better government and a stronger economy in the days and weeks ahead."

"As a former public servant himself, Mark Carney values the contributions of Canada's public service and recognizes its role in delivering crucial programs and services for Canadians," Williams said in the statement. "A strong, diverse, and effective civil service is fundamental to building a better future for all, and will be essential to building a government that delivers results and change for Canadians."

At a Feb. 5 press conference in Windsor, Ont., Carney noted in French that there had been approximately 30 per cent growth of staff in government, and that his priorities would encourage business investment rather than government spending. He also said in English that he would not cut government programs that had already been implemented, such as dental care and child care.

"The point I was making was that it's about where we go from here, looking forward, and more of an emphasis on policies that catalyze business investment... not growing government spending from here, more using technology and other measures," Carney said.

During a Feb. 6 press conference in Ottawa, Baylis said he'll be laying out his economic plan in the coming days or weeks. He did note, however, that he would seek to pay for a promised

two per cent of GDP on defence spending in 2030 through "intelligent procurement."

"If you do procurement intelligently, we can use it to reinvest in our own universities, in our own industries, you can make great jobs with it," he said.

"One of the things we can do quite soon, though, is we are underpaying" members of the Armed Forces, said Baylis. "These are certain things that we can do right away, to say, 'look, this is a very good profession, we need you, we want to encourage you.' And we could look at how we pay them, how we give them pensions. There's a lot of work just on that level."

Earlier that day, Gould also called for better salaries for service personnel at a press conference in Toronto as a way of increasing defence spending. She also told reporters that she would immediately appoint a "procurement czar."

"We have so much military procurement equipment that is on the docket that we're not getting fast enough, and so not only do we need to ensure that our military is paid adequately for the work that they do, we need to make sure they have the equipment that they need to do the job, and so we need to really clean up and streamline our military procurement so that we can accelerate our commitment to two per cent," she said.

Elsewhere in Gould's campaign pledges, public servants would be tasked with work to boost the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive to 50 per cent offered on a down payment, and reduce the work needed to qualify for the scheme. Gould said her government would also explore the creation of a "National Housing Material Strategic Reserve" of drywall, lumber, copper, and cement to prevent material shortages and price manipulation.

Freeland's campaign page, at the time of publication, did not include specific pledges related to public service staffing or work arrangements. However, IRCC employees would contend with a promise to make "immigration systems favour skilled trades workers." On the procurement front, Canadian companies would be prioritized over American equivalents as a result of the Trump administration's threats of tariffs.

Public servants would also need to prepare a "precisely and painfully targeted" list of retaliatory tariffs on American goods, with "Florida orange growers, Wisconsin dairy farmers, [and] Michigan dishwasher manufacturers," singled out.

Deputy ministers, meanwhile, would work with far fewer ministers in a Freeland government. The former deputy prime minister has promised no more than 20 ministers would comprise her cabinet, a reduction from the 38 currently in the ministry. Freeland is also proposing fewer political staffers, with a pledge to halve the size of the Prime Minister's Office.

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## NEWS

# ‘Canadians are meeting the moment of the existential threat to our identity,’ says Furey as premiers head to Washington this week

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey says Donald Trump’s ‘51st state’ pitch for Canada is ‘incredibly insulting’ and an ‘assault on our democratic institutions and our sovereignty.’

Continued from page 1

to our identity and our values that are fundamental to who we are,” said Furey in a phone interview from St. John’s.

He said he believes the American president “underestimated the resolve and courage and pride of Canadians, and perhaps thought there was a more fractured country that there is or will be.”

In the wake of Trump’s threat, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) eclipsed his “axe the tax” campaign-style response to the federal’s carbon-pricing scheme with a “Canada First” motto. NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) put the focus on “build Canadian, buy Canadian.” Former deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) is using “Fight for Canada” as a slogan in her bid for the federal Liberal leadership.

The last time NDP MP Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.) saw such an outpouring of pride was when another Team Canada defeated its Soviet hockey counterpart in the 1972 Summit Series.

“That felt like a nation-defining moment and a nation-threatening moment if we lost—but this is much more serious,” said Angus, who helped establish the non-partisan group Pledge for Canada, which as of Feb. 6 had gathered about 53,000 signatures to an online petition calling for “a whole-of-Canada approach” in addressing “the threats of economic coercion from the United States.”

While the 1972 Canada-Soviet Union summit series predates him, 49-year-old Furey said the last time he felt such an outpouring of Canadian pride was when he was waving a Maple Leaf flag at the Unity Rally in Montreal on Oct. 27, 1995, three days before the Quebec independence referendum.

“To have an attack from a foreign source on our sovereignty is much different than that,” said Furey, who has characterized Trump as “a bully,” who has “intentionally caused confusion around the border and the potential of tariffs.”

“My concern is that this president is motivated from an imperialistic agenda and, consequently, appeasement cannot be a strategy that Canada employs,” said Furey.

The cross-border dispute is also personal for the premier—a surgeon by training—whose wife, Allison, was born in Portland, Ore., and whose eldest child was born in Baltimore, Md., where he completed his studies in orthopedic trauma.

“This attack has left most of us confused and equally hurt by the spirit and intention of it,” said Furey of Trump’s verbal and policy assault against Canada. “Hopefully, he’ll feel the pushback and the strong united voice of Canadians.”

The premier said that he also “fundamentally disagreed” with “so-called Canadians like [Kevin] O’Leary”—the former star of CBC TV’s *Dragons’ Den* who ran for the federal Conservative leadership in 2017—“espousing the benefits of economic union” with the U.S.

“It’s completely unacceptable to our forefathers who fought side by side to protect the sovereignty and independence of our great nation.”

Furey will be in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 12 with his fellow premiers as part of a mission led by Ontario’s Doug Ford. The goal is to meet with “key members” of the Trump administration and Congress, along with business leaders, according to a news release.

“I do think diplomacy will win the day and the relationship between Canada and the United States is stronger than one president,” Furey said.

Ford has been trying to meet with Trump and, if that happens while Furey is in the room, Furey said he will tell the president that Canada and the U.S. have shared priorities “that do not require a stick,” such as ending cross-border fentanyl shipments.

“The only people who win when friends and neighbours fight are enemies—and make no mistake, around the world, other powers are watching what is happening between Canada and the United States,” said Furey.

According to Angus, “Donald Trump forced us to have the conversation: are we worth being a nation or not?”

“You’re seeing a level of national unity that we haven’t seen because he threatened our sovereignty. I don’t think Canadians walk that back that easily right now,” said Angus. He said he doesn’t believe Canadians “will go back from here” given the “erratic and undemocratic threat south of the border.”

“People see Trump as a potential Putin. We’ve never seen our American ally like that before,” he said.

Angus said that, just as Russian President Vladimir Putin underestimated the resolve of Ukrainians to defend their nation against invasion, Trump miscalculated the pushback from Canadians who view “bending and breaking as not an option.”

British Columbia NDP Premier David Eby said at a news conference in North Vancouver last week that “we have a reputation for being a chill, relaxed, kind of easygoing country,” but “if you want to see Canadians get their back up and get some things done, then threaten our sovereignty.”

That same day, New Brunswick Liberal Premier Susan Holt said the surge in Canadians searching for homegrown producers and products “comes alongside a bit of an anti-American sentiment—a frustration that our closest neighbour and trading partner has decided to treat us this way.”

Nova Scotia “stands in solidarity with our provincial and territorial colleagues,” the province’s Progressive Conservative Premier Tim Houston said in a statement on Feb. 3.

“I remain committed to Team Canada,” he said, who noted that Canada’s relationship with the U.S. “has survived wars, recessions and pandemics.”

Prince Edward Island’s Progressive Conservative Premier Dennis King said in a CBC News interview last week that “our sovereignty isn’t for sale.”

In a series of posts on X last week, Manitoba NDP Premier Wab Kinew said that “it’s really important right now for all Canadians to stand together and for us to be united.”

“Trump’s tariff tax is an attack on Canada and who we are,” said Kinew, who added that “if you want to find ways to fight back, shop local and buy Canadian.”

Yukon Liberal Premier Ranj Pillai echoed that sentiment with a Feb. 1 statement on Facebook.

“The Trump tariffs are an insult to the friendship and partnership that has existed between Canada and the U.S. for generations,” he posted.

“I encourage all Yukoners to buy local and buy Canadian.”

Ford, who has become a regular fixture on American television networks in pushing back against the Trump tariffs, said on X that “Canada didn’t start this fight with the U.S., but you better believe we’re ready to win it.”

Angus said that Canada’s patriotic response to the American duties “showed the world” the importance of demonstrating strength in dealing with Trump.

That display could come from bolstering Canada’s economy from within—an issue that was raised at a Feb. 5 meeting between the prime minister and the premiers in which dismantling domestic trade barriers was on the agenda.

Northwest Territories Premier R.J. Simpson was on the call and his cabinet colleague, Industry Minister Caitlin Cleveland, chairs the federal-provincial-territorial Committee on Internal Trade that seeks to strengthen the Canadian Free Trade Agreement by reducing the red tape involved in moving goods and services across the country.

“Everyone’s on the same page to work together to improve trade internally,” said Simpson in an interview.

On X last week, Alberta United Conservative Premier Danielle Smith said that “it’s time Canada eliminates interprovincial trade barriers so that Canadian families, businesses, and our national economy can weather this incoming trade dispute with the U.S.”

Also last week, Quebec Premier François Legault said in the National Assembly that “we must increase our trade with the rest of Canada and, yes, we must work towards real free trade between the Canadian provinces.”

On Feb. 5, Internal Trade Minister Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.) said that interprovincial trade barriers could be removed within 30 days.

Simpson said that while the Northwest Territories doesn’t share a border with the U.S., residents are feeling a sense of “Canadian pride and Canadian unity” in the aftermath of the Trump tariff threat.

“I was at the grocery store in Hay River and every aisle I went into I had a conversation about buying Canadian,” said the premier about his hometown.

“This is a very rare moment when we face these external threats.”

In Nunavut, Premier P.J. Akeagok said that Canadians are witnessing “a moment in time in our history where there is so much discussion about our identity and what opportunities we have as a country—and it’s really put a spotlight specifically on the North.”

He said that Nunavut—where critical minerals are plentiful but are largely untapped—required investment and infrastructure “to potentially create a market to bring that very much needed resource to the world.”

Trudeau won’t be on the first ministers’ trip to the U.S. capital. But with less than a month to go as prime minister, he has received credit for sparking the national pride sweeping the country.

Angus praised Trudeau’s “incredibly powerful” Feb. 1 late-night response to Trump’s tariffs as the prime minister’s “finest moment.”

“On Saturday night at 9:30 p.m., Canadians are watching hockey or are at the bar. But everybody watched that speech—and I think he understood the importance of the moment,” said Angus.

Simpson was among the viewers of the prime minister’s declaration.

“There were just two of us in the room, but I felt like I was watching with all of Canada,” he said. “It was really a moment when we could feel the nation coming together, and I feel there is great momentum that we can build on for the benefit of all Canadians.”

Trudeau “does well in emergencies,” he added, “and this is an emergency.”

The prime minister “met the moment with the tone and the language,” said Furey, “and I think Canadians responded appropriately.”

The Hill Times

# Party Central



By Stuart Benson

## Prime minister looks forward and back for Lunar New Year and Black History Month

Trudeau's selfie-line-farewell tour continues with pair of parties on Feb. 4 and 5 at SJAM and the Canadian Museum of History

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau hit the Hill social circuit last week for what's beginning to feel like a pre-farewell tour, with a pair of parties to celebrate the Lunar New Year and the seventh year of Canada's belated International Decade for People of African Descent.

With apologies to Canada's Asian diasporas, **Party Central** missed the emailed invitation to the New Year celebrations at SJAM on Feb. 4. Fortunately, photog-extraordinaire **Sam Garcia** didn't miss a beat and was on hand to provide his services. Garcia and other deep-background sources confirmed the night was a lively one.

Joining Trudeau in the celebrations—alongside hundreds of community members from Ottawa and across Canada—was a sizeable contingent of his cabinet and caucus, including Diversity Minister **Kamal Khara**, International Trade Minister **Mary Ng**, Families Minister **Jenna Sudds**, Official Languages Minister **Rachel Bendayan**, Environment Minister **Steven Guilbeault**, and MPs **Yasir Naqvi**, **Leah Taylor Roy**, **Paul Chiang**, **Jean Yip**, **Anju Dhillon**, **Helena Jaczek**, **Ali Ehsassi**, and **Majid Jowhari**.

A pair of festive lions were also let loose at the event. However, Trudeau successfully soothed the savage beasts, presumably by employing that soft-toned drama teacher voice he uses when things get contentious.

Following cultural performances, including a string ensemble courtesy of the Korean Cultural Centre and a speech from Trudeau, he took one last long walk down the selfie line—at least for this particular event—as prime minister.

The following day, after keeping a more watchful eye over incoming emails, **Party Central** successfully RSVPed to the Black History Month reception on Feb. 5, across the river at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Que. As an added benefit, the ever-vigilant Garcia was also present to bolster the social coverage.

Joining Trudeau at that event were many of the same Liberals who were on hand the previous night, including Khara, Sudds, Bendayan, Jowhari, Yip, Chiang, and Dhillon.

**Party Central** spotted several additions to the Grit entourage, including Women and Youth Minister **Marci Ien**, Justice Minister **Arif Virani**, and Small Business Minister **Rechie Valdez**, MPs **Arielle Kayabaga**, **Bryan May**, **Francesco Sorbara**, **Pam Damoff**, **Salma Zahid**, and **Anita Vandenberg**. Also in attendance were Government Representative in the Senate Senator **Marc Gold**, PSG Senator and **Andrew Cardozo**.

**Party Central** also spotted Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia **Amira Elghawaby**, and a

contingent of RCMP top brass, including Commissioner **Mike Duheme**, and deputy commissioners **Marie-Claude Dandenaault** and **Bryan Larkin**; **Joseph Smith**, co-founder of Generation Chosen; **Russell Grosse**, executive director of Nova Scotia's Black Cultural Centre; **Jeanne Lehman**, founder of Black Canadian Women in Action, and Canada's first Black female MP and federal cabinet minister **Jean Augustine**, who joined the event virtually.

**Party Central** can't be confident that is an exhaustive list of the Liberals in attendance; however, if you weren't dressed to the tens—one level above the nines—that evening, or at least on stage, you likely filtered into the background among the vibrant colours and patterns of the gowns to dashikis being shown off, so the average Hill attire wasn't gonna cut it.

Breaking up the speeches delivered by Khara, Ien, Kayabaga, and Trudeau, there were also performances by the Pan Fantasy Steelband, Leading Ladies Canada's Youth Choir, and a Carnival-inspired fashion show from SugaCayne Costumes in Toronto.

Given this year's theme—Black Legacy and Leadership: Celebrating Canadian History and uplifting future generations—the countdown to Trudeau's departure and the looming election later this year, which would likely see the Conservatives form government, loomed large over much of the speeches from Khara, Ien, Kayabaga, and Trudeau.

In her speech, Khara declared “we must not go back” on the progress Canada has made, echoing former U.S. vice-president **Kamala Harris'** 2024 campaign slogan, while Ien reminded the audience that “progress does not ask for permission,” and the “now is not negotiable.”

During his speech, Trudeau said that to “build a better future for all Canadians, we must learn from our history,” and “recognize historical and ongoing discrimination,” even if the Canadian government itself is the source of that discrimination. Presumably the plaintiffs with the Black Class Action Secretariat will be happy to hear that.

Trudeau also highlighted the action his government has taken to right those historical and ongoing wrongs, including Canada's first Black Justice Strategy, Entrepreneurship Program, the Philanthropic Endowment Fund, and the Mental Health Fund, and co-sponsoring the UN's second decade for Peoples of African Descent, from January 2025 to December 2034. However, Canada is still in the first decade, as we only recognized it four years late in 2018 and which Trudeau extended last year until 2028.

After wrapping his speech, Trudeau once again descended from the stage for one final walk down the selfie line before exiting out the back door as the gathered media, **Party Central** included, were escorted up the escalators and shown the door so the actual party could begin.

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The Hill Times



*The Hill Times*  
photographs by  
Sam Garcia &  
Stuart Benson

**1 & 2.** Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined the Lunar New Year Celebrations on Feb. 4, left, at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, followed by the Government of Canada's 2025 Black History Month reception on Feb. 5, at the Museum of History. **3.** Dr. Ken Ng, chairman of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Markham, left, and MP Paul Chiang. **4.** After a generous government handout, Trudeau can quiet even his most ferocious critics. **5.** Charmain Tulloch, left, staffer for Minister Ien; MP Pam Damoff; Paulina Chow, executive director of the Terry Fox Humanitarian; and Josh Abaki, BLG LLP. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson **6.** Special Representative Emira Alghawaby, left, Minister Arif Virani, and Mohammed Hashim, CEO Canadian Race Relations Foundation. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson **7.** MP Barish Chagger, left, RCMP Deputy Commissioner Bryan Larkin, and Richard Pinnock, Canadian Caribbean Association. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson **8.** Sulaire Parahoo models one of SugaCayne designer Candice Dixons Carnival costumes. **9.** Minister Khara **10.** Minister Ien. **11.** MP Kayabaga. **12.** International Trade Minister Mary Ng.

## FEATURE

# Comedy in times of crises: creators on making light of

Mark Critch and team talk Trump, Trudeau, and the time they tried crashing a Poilievre rally.

BY RIDDHI KACHHELA

U.S. President Donald Trump's return to the White House may have thrown the world in a turmoil, but it has given satirists in Canada and elsewhere renewed fuel to strike back with wit.

While world leaders and journalists tip toe around the U.S. president, cautiously weighing their words, comedians are owning the fight and showing a mirror to the outlandishness of today's times.

A trade war with the U.S. may not be the "time for soft cheesies," but it definitely makes for some solid jokes.

Ask Canada's star entertainer Mark Critch of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, whose recent sketch on boycotting American products became a sort of war cry for ordinary Canadians.

Critch knows exactly what it takes to get under Trump's skin as he dons a wig, tints his face orange, and takes to the stage in Halifax before a live audience, impersonating the most powerful man in the world.

Another one of Critch's recent videos that went viral reimaged Trump's inauguration speech from Jan. 20 and featured a spoof of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith crashing the event. It was put together spontaneously in just hours.

"Monday afternoon I watched the inauguration, made notes, and wrote a monologue while I was

watching Donald Trump ... and then we waited for the image of what the room would be like, and then they put that on a projection screen behind me, and got the podium he was going to use. They built one of those," Mark Critch told *The Hill Times* in an interview.

As threatening as Trump may appear, to Critch, he's one of the easiest characters to play on screen—and the comedian has played several of them in his 20 years on the show, including acting as then-Newfoundland and Labrador premier Danny Williams.

"He [Trump] says things to get reactions. I don't think he wakes up in the middle of night with a great idea and writes it down. ... He's a showman ... the way I think of him is he is a wrestler ... like Hulk Hogan is different when he is having breakfast with his kids than he is when he is in the stadium ... it's the same with Donald Trump," Critch added.

Trump is not the only focus of the show. From Rick Mercer's *Talking to Americans*, to Shaun Majumder's *No Pun Intended*, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* has been a platform for social commentary on various aspects of Canadian life since 1993.

In its 32<sup>nd</sup> season, *22 Minutes*' cast member Chris Wilson portrays both Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Stacey McGunnigle does impressions of Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland and Alberta Premier Smith, and Aba Amuquandoh and Trent McClellan feature in a variety of news bulletins and sketches alongside Critch.

Some of the show's sketches often take a dig at the retail grocery store giant Loblaws, too.

Head writer Jordan Foisy, who has been at the helm of the

show's scripting for three seasons, says the aim is to critique big grocery chains that the government has left to thrive.

"Both sides of all of our political parties are pretty toothless when it comes to monopolies, and all we can do is make fun of them ... no one's about to campaign that they shouldn't own Shoppers [Drug Mart], but they probably shouldn't. They shouldn't own as many grocery stores as they do. So I think that is something that does unite all Canadians," Foisy said.

Show-runner Mike Allison said each episode's topics are chosen based on what's hot in the news, and what Canadians are interested in in the days leading up to it.

"What are the types of things that Canadians are feeling and thinking about this week? What was the thing that everybody was talking about at work or around the kitchen table?... we focus on those and that seems to be the thing that will resonate with people," he said.

Critch, Allison, and Foisy have all been a part of the show for years, but according to them, the way their audience reacts to some of their content recently has undergone a marked shift from when they started.

For one, people on social media are angrier and more polarized now. The show is sometimes accused of being biased, Allison said, and slammed for either making too much fun of Poilievre and too little fun of Trudeau, or vice versa.

Critch revealed he has also received death threats in the past, and even Trudeau was left furious years ago when Critch took out a joint in his office for a segment before cannabis was legalized.

Cracking jokes about politicians can expectedly get you in

Mark Critch portrays Donald Trump on screen for *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. Picture courtesy of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*



tricky spots, but Foisy stressed the show is non-partisan and tries to walk the thin line between what's acceptable and what's funny.

"We don't really make fun of people's personal lives ... it's kind of like the unspoken rule of Canadian political coverage," he said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team was sensitive towards ensuring that they did not fuel any far-right conspiracies, as per Allison, but those were exceptional times.

For Critch, he said it's vital that while they have a voice, they are not seen as being mean.



Critch has received rave reviews online for his portrayal of Donald Trump. Image courtesy of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*



*This Hour Has 22 Minutes* cast member Stacey McGunnigle in a recent sketch on Chrystia Freeland's campaign to become the prime minister. Image courtesy of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*



Critch interviewed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for the New Year's Eve episode last year. Screenshot from *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*

## FEATURE

# *This Hour Has 22 Minutes'* politics in a polarized world



believes, could be because people may not have travelled to various corners of the country to understand issues that shape certain perspectives.

"I think the real division in this country isn't from people being jerks on X ... it comes from people not really understanding, say, on the East Coast the frustrations in Alberta because they don't really travel back and forth ... the more Canadians meet, it's easier to see that we're closer together than we are further apart."

Not that the partisan accusations have stopped the team from bringing out the funny side of political leaders. Former prime ministers Jean Chrétien and Stephen Harper appeared on the show years ago.

More recently, Critch got a one-on-one interview with Trudeau towards the end of last year, and Critch also learned some jiu-jitsu from NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh.

"Stephen Harper was very funny, but hid that side of himself from people, which I found very interesting. He was very reserved in public, but was a very great impressionist ... I have a long relationship with Trudeau now, and he is good at taking a joke. Singh, too, has been good to us," Critch recalled.

When he was just a finance critic, Poilievre was also interviewed by Critch in 2017 for a segment on the Liberal Party's proposed tax reforms.

The Tory leader has, however, kept his distance from the show recently, despite the producers sending Poilievre multiple invitations. Coming from a party that wants to defund the CBC, this is not entirely unexpected.

The show's makers have tried to ambush Poilievre nonetheless, leading to a moment in 2024

when Poilievre impersonator Chris Wilson and the team tried to crash the real Poilievre's rally in Halifax.

"Chris Wilson was dressed as Pierre, and we were getting pretty nervous on the drive up...we thought this was going to be so stupid...you don't even look like him. But we got there and a man waved at him and said he went to the same school, and we realized they thought he was Pierre ... from that point, everyone thought he was Pierre," Foisy said describing their adventure, which even continued after Poilievre gave his speech on stage.

As people were coming out, Wilson greeted them as Poilievre and they believed it was him, even after they just saw the real conservative leader inside.

Much uncertainty prevails over the CBC's future if Poilievre does become the next prime minister.

The show's creators defended the national broadcaster, and said there will always be a place for the CBC in Canada, which they said is part of the country's identity, much like the BBC is in the United Kingdom.

Especially with the resurgence of Trump and the spread of disinformation on social media platforms, Critch said Canada needs to protect its national media because it is irreplaceable.

"No company can afford to do it coast to coast, and there's no goddamn way you're going to make a dime with a TV camera way up North, but we have to be there because those people deserve to have their stories shared within their communities," Critch said.

Allison echoed the view, and added that the country would be lesser without the CBC.

"I think our show, in particular, because it's been on so long,

is something that people can be proud of, and that's what I try to do here ... I'd like for our show to continue fighting against hatred and to try to find some common ground for people, or at the very least comfort people with laughter," he said.

For now, the show goes on with much ground to cover. Canada will have a new prime minister within weeks, and a general election may not be far behind.

Allison revealed they have yet to find a cast member to portray Liberal leadership contender Mark Carney, but their election content planning is well underway.

On a lighter note, *The Hill Times* also picked Critch's comedic brain for what birthday presents he would give to party leaders, and he did not disappoint.

To Poilievre, Critch said he would give a coupon for an eyewear company so Poilievre can go back to wearing glasses and being his old self, while Singh would receive a new set of bicycle tires.

"If he wants to be a prime minister, he's going to have to do a lot of pedalling," Critch quipped.

For Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, Critch said he would like to send him his resumé.

"I think it'd be very funny if I ran in Newfoundland under the Bloc Québécois banner. I would like to be the first non-Quebec seat in the party."

Trudeau was already handed a "good luck" banner after Critch's last interview with him, but Critch would also give him a case of beer.

"And I would say, 'See you later, pal.'"

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*The Hill Times*

"I've got lots of friends who are Conservative, lots of friends who are Liberal or NDP. I voted for all three parties over the time of my life... I'm not a partisan guy... and I try not to say anything on the show that I wouldn't say to someone's face."

He said he attributes many of the harsh comments online to accounts that may either not be real, or to people who are braver behind the keyboard than in real life.

In Critch's view, most Canadians are in mid spectrum when it comes to political beliefs. The differences that may exist, he



Cast member Chris Wilson replicating Pierre Poilievre's famous apple-eating interview on screen. Screenshot from *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, right, with Critch. Image courtesy of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*



Critch in the studio where he and the *22 Minutes* cast record before a live audience in Halifax. Image courtesy of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*

# Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



## Joly promotes new Canada-U.S. relations director

Plus, Women and Gender Equality Minister Marci Ien has a new director of communications.

Amid United States President Donald Trump's return to the White House and under the looming threat of a trade war, Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly** has appointed a director of Canada-U.S. relations within her office: **Jeremy Bruce**.

Bruce was most recently deputy director of policy to Joly. First hired as a policy adviser to the minister at the start of 2022, he was later promoted to "senior" status before being elevated to deputy director last September.

As a policy adviser, Bruce helped keep an eye on Canada-U.S. relations, but with his promotion last month that is now his main focus, making him the senior point-person in Joly's office on the file.

Prior to joining Joly's team, Bruce worked as a policy adviser to then-national defence minister **Harjit Sajjan**. He's also a former consultant with Summa Strategies in Ottawa, and holds a master's degree in global affairs from the University of Toronto, alongside a bachelor's degree in political studies and history from Queen's University.

Previously, no one in Joly's office held the title of Canada-U.S. relations director.

**Hill Climbers** understands that along with Bruce's new role, **Nicholas Lovrics**, who's been supporting Joly's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Rob Oliphant**, since the end of 2023, has been given the added responsibility of supporting Bruce in his new capacity as director.

Lovrics is a former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Ali Ehsassi**, who chaired the House Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee from 2022 up until the group disbanded upon prorogation on Jan. 6. While working towards a master's degree in comparative politics at The London School of Economics and Political Science, Lovrics also worked as a freelance political risk analyst with Global Risk



Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly**, right, speaks with reporters about the government's response to proposed U.S. trade tariffs alongside Public Safety Minister **David McGuinty** in the West Block on Jan. 27. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

Insights, amongst other past experience.

As has been reported, **Diamond Isinger** returned to the Prime Minister's Office last month as a special adviser for Canada-U.S. relations.

With Bruce's new title, senior policy adviser **Nadia Hadj Mohamed** has been promoted to deputy director of policy to Joly.

A former assistant to then-New Brunswick senator **Joseph Day**, Hadj Mohamed has been working for the Trudeau government since late 2016, starting as a policy adviser to then-in-

ternational development minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau**.

After sticking with the international development file for the first few months of now-former MP **Maryam Monsef's** time in the role, Hadj Mohamed left to join then-foreign affairs minister **Chrystia Freeland's** team as a policy adviser in June 2019. Freeland was shuffled out of the role after that year's election and replaced by now-Innovation Minister **François-Philippe Champagne**, who promoted Hadj Mohamed to "senior" status—a role she held through **Marc Garneau's** subsequent turn in the role.

Hadj Mohamed holds a bachelor's degree in international development and globalization from the University of Ottawa, and a master's in conflict studies from Saint Paul University.

**Tania Belisle-Leclerc** remains director of policy to the minister.

Joly's communications team has also undergone some changes of late.

For one, deputy director of communications **Marie-Christine Demers** has been named senior adviser for strategic initiatives—making her the senior-most staffer overseeing long-term initiatives attached to the file, like the Indo-Pacific Strategy, along with tackling some stakeholder relations work.

Previously, **Caroline Séguin** had been director of outreach and strategic initiatives to Joly, but she left in March 2024, as reported at the time.

Demers first joined Joly's team as deputy communications director roughly one year ago, and up until then had been working as an independent consultant. From 2012 to 2023, she taught a master's degree course in public and government relations at the Université de Montréal, over which time she also worked in a variety of different roles, including as senior director of public affairs and community relations for Gazoduc, a Quebec-based natural gas pipeline developer; as a senior manager for public affairs and sustainability with Énergir; and tackling strategy, corporate affairs, and European institutional affairs for GNL Québec, among other things.

Press secretary **Isabella Orozco-Madison**, meanwhile, has been elevated to deputy director of communications.

She originally started in the foreign affairs under then-minister **Freeland**, having begun as a 2017 summer intern, after which she was hired as a special assis-

tant for operations. Orozco-Madison went on to briefly serve as executive assistant to then-justice minister **David Lametti** and his chief of staff before exiting to become a senior special assistant and communications adviser to then-immigration minister **Sean Fraser** in May 2022.

Come the end of that year, Orozco-Madison changed offices again, this time returning to **Freeland's** employ to serve as a communications adviser in her office as then-deputy prime minister and finance minister. Orozco-Madison was hired as press secretary to Joly in September 2023.

Digital communications adviser **Mehak Minhas**

left Joly's team this past December after roughly nine months on the job. Minhas previously worked as an assistant to now-Democratic Institutions Minister **Ruby Sahota** as the MP for Brampton North, Ont., and part-time as a youth worker with Achév's EmpowHer program.

Joly has already hired a new digital communications adviser for her office, with **Nanki Singh** taking on the role, which includes responsibility for social media, as of the first week of February.

Singh is a former press secretary to Women and Gender Equality and Youth Minister **Marci Ien**, whose office Singh left in late May 2024.

A former constituency assistant to then-Toronto Liberal MP **Carlynn Bennett**, Singh

has been working for Liberal ministers since April 2020, starting as executive assistant to then-public services and procurement minister **Anita Anand**. Singh followed Anand to the national defence file when the minister was shuffled after the 2021 election, continuing as her EA. In the fall of 2022, Singh left to return to the public services office under then-minister **Helena Jaczek** as social media manager. She was hired as press secretary to Ien in September 2023.

**James Fitz-Morris** continues as director of communications to Joly, whose office is run by chief of staff **Alexandre Boulé**.

### Minister Ien hires new comms director

Speaking of Ien, a week before the Dec. 20 cabinet shakeup, **Emelyana Titarenko** made a well-timed office switch, leaving her post as director of communications to then-Treasury Board president **Anand** to do the same for Ien as women and gender equality and youth minister.

Titarenko officially started with Ien's office on Dec. 13, and had been working for **Anand** since September 2023. **Anand** was shuffled out of the Treasury Board portfolio on Dec. 20, but kept responsibility for the transport file—which she picked up following **Pablo Rodriguez's** resignation—becoming minister for transport and internal

trade. Pre-shuffle, **Anand** had two communications directors: **Titarenko**, and **Laura Scaffidi**, who oversaw communications related to the transport file.

Titarenko is already familiar with the youth portfolio, having gotten her start on the Hill in June 2020 as a special assistant for communications and issues management to then-diversity, inclusion, and youth minister **Bardish Chagger**, who later promoted her to press secretary.

She's since worked as press secretary to then-infrastructure and communities minister **Catherine McKenna**, and as a communications and issues management adviser to **Duclos** as then-health minister.

Ien is still without a press secretary, but late last fall—and unreported as yet—**Ruth Mekonnen** was hired as a special assistant for communications to the minister.

In another belated update for Ien's team, director of parliamentary affairs and issues management **Nyagua Chiek** went on leave in September. Special assistant for parliamentary affairs and issues management **Sarah Thomas** has since stepped in as acting director.

Thomas has been working for Ien since the fall of 2023, and before then was an assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Pam Damoff**. She's also briefly worked in the constituency office of **Kitchener-Conestoga**, Ont., Liberal MP **Tim Louis**. **Dunerci Caceres** is chief of staff to Ien.

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*The Hill Times*



Jeremy Bruce is now director of Canada-U.S. relations to Minister Joly. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Marie-Christine Demers is now a senior adviser for strategic initiatives. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Nadia Hadj Mohamed is now deputy director of policy to the foreign affairs minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Nanki Singh is now a digital communications adviser to Minister Joly. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



# Parliamentary Calendar

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to [news@hilltimes.com](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

## Ford to lead Canada's premiers on joint mission to Washington, D.C., on Feb. 12



Ontario Premier Doug Ford, pictured second left, with Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston, left, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc, and Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly on Jan. 15, 2025, at the first ministers' meeting in Ottawa, will be heading to Washington, D.C., this week. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

### TUESDAY, FEB. 11

**Food and Beverage Canada's Policy Breakfast**—Food and Beverage Canada hosts its annual policy breakfast to kickoff Canadian Ag Day featuring a panel discussion titled "Boosting Competitiveness and Productivity in Food and Beverage Manufacturing" on this industry's critical needs to thrive, compete, and lead both domestically and globally. Confirmed speakers include former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul, and Canadian Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Candace Laing. Full agenda to follow. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Contact [admin@fbc-abc.com](mailto:admin@fbc-abc.com).

**NextGen 2025: Shaping the Future of Public Affairs Today**—Maryscott (Scotty) Greenwood, Global Head of Government Relations at Manulife Financial Corporation, will deliver the keynote address at NextGen 2025 hosted by NHM Connect and Beacon North Strategies. This must-attend professional development event for public affairs professionals will feature topics including AI in public affairs, reading federal budgets, Canada-U.S. relations, and more. Tuesday, Feb. 11, 7:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. ET, The Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details and tickets: [lu.ma/toni5emc](mailto:lu.ma/toni5emc).

**CCSPA Annual Government Breakfast Reception**—The CCSPA Annual Government Breakfast Reception will take place at the Westin Hotel on Tuesday, Feb. 11 from 7:30-9 a.m. ET. All parliamentarians are welcome. Please RSVP to [hughesc@ccspa.org](mailto:hughesc@ccspa.org)

**Digital Access Day**—The Canadian Internet Society hosts Digital Access Day. This year's theme is "Bridging the Digital Divide: Ensuring Access for All," and features discussions on affordability, digital literacy, online safety, and public policy to create a more inclusive digital future. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper St. Details via Eventbrite.

**Bloc Leader Blanchet to Deliver Remarks**—Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet will deliver remarks in French on "Quebec at a time of tariff walls" at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Le Westin Montréal, 270 rue Saint-Antoine O., Montreal. Details: [corim.qc.ca](mailto:corim.qc.ca).

**Nathalie Drouin to Deliver Remarks**—Nathalie Drouin, the prime

minister's national security and intelligence advisor, will deliver keynote remarks at the launch of the new book *Canada Among Nations: Twenty-First Century National Security*, a timely exploration of the challenges and priorities shaping Canada's national security in an evolving global landscape. Hosted by Carleton University. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Westin Hotel. Details: [carleton.ca](mailto:carleton.ca).

**Panel: 'Black on the Ballot'**—Carleton University hosts the panel discussion "Black on the Ballot: Centring Black Narratives in Public Life," part of a research study and podcast series documenting the experiences of Black Canadians in politics. Participants will discuss how to increase the number of Black Canadians in public life and offer practical strategies for integrating Black perspectives into politics, journalism, and research. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. ET (reception at 6 p.m.) at Richcraft Atrium, Carleton University. Details: [carleton.ca](mailto:carleton.ca).

### WEDNESDAY, FEB. 12

**Canada's Premiers to Washington, D.C.**—Ontario Premier Doug Ford, as chair of the Council of the Federation, will lead a joint mission of Canada's premiers to Washington, D.C., to meet with key members of the new White House administration, Congress, and business leaders. Details: [canadaspremiers.ca](mailto:canadaspremiers.ca).

**Canada-U.S. Relations Conference**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts an invitation-only discussion on the breadth and status of the Canada-U.S. relationship under the new Trump administration with both Canadian and American experts. Topics will include trade and tariffs, border security, energy relations and security, and defence and national security collaboration. Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 9 a.m. in Ottawa. Details: [cgai.ca](mailto:cgai.ca).

**Panel: 'Helping Canadian Businesses Take Flight'**—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a panel discussion, "How the Nation's Largest Airline is Helping Canadian Businesses Take Flight" featuring Mark Nasr, executive vice-president of marketing and digital, Air Canada, and president of Aeroplan; Vandra Provato, chief marketing and digital officer, LCBO; Michiel Wielhouwer, president and country manager, VISA Canada; and Lizaveta Akhmedzian Carew, co-founder and CEO, Chexy. Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. Details: [economicclub.ca](mailto:economicclub.ca).

**Book Launch: Why Marriage Still Matters**—Cardus hosts the launch of a new book, *...Do? Why Marriage Still Matters*. Co-authors Andrea Mrozek and Peter Jon Mitchell explore the enduring value of marriage through the lens of social science. What makes marriage relevant in our modern world? Refreshments, book purchases and signing. Wednesday, Feb. 12, from 6-8 p.m. ET at Cardus, 45 Rideau St., 8th floor. Register: [cardus.ca](mailto:cardus.ca).

### THURSDAY, FEB. 13

**Webinar: 'Impact of Political Disruption on Business'**—B.C.'s Association of Professional Economists hosts a webinar, "The Impact of Scarcity and Political Disruption on Canada's Business Climate." Greg Lyle, founder and president of Innovative Research Group, will share his firm's findings on the pressures facing governments and political parties, and offer insights on how different parties are likely to respond. Thursday, Feb. 13, at 1 p.m. ET happening online: [cabe.ca](mailto:cabe.ca).

### FRIDAY, FEB. 14

**Book Launch: My Life in Politics**—Carleton University hosts the launch of *My Life in Politics*, a memoir by former Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy. Friday, Feb. 14, at 11 a.m. ET at Carleton University, 608 Pigiavik, 1125 Colonel By Dr. Details: [events.carleton.ca](mailto:events.carleton.ca).

### TUESDAY, FEB. 18

**Lunch: 'Trade Wars and Canada'**—Canada's former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul, who's now a principal at GT & Co., and a member of the prime minister's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations, will deliver remarks on "Trade Wars and Canada: Finding Solutions in Uncertain Times," a lunch event hosted by the C. D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Feb. 18, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300. Details: [cdhowe.org](mailto:cdhowe.org).

### WEDNESDAY, FEB. 19—FRIDAY, FEB. 21

**First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Conference**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts "Mind the Gap: Advancing First Nations Housing, Infrastructure and Drinking Water," focusing on updates in urban, on-reserve, on-community, and northern First Nations housing, as well as asset management planning, water and

wastewater management, and connectivity, and how they contribute to closing the First Nations infrastructure gap. Wednesday, Feb. 19, to Friday, Feb. 21, at the Westin Downtown Calgary. Details: [afn.ca](mailto:afn.ca).

### THURSDAY, FEB. 20

**Panel: 'The Future of Money and Decentralized Finance'**—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunch event, "The Future of Money and Decentralized Finance: Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges for 2025." Panelists will explore how blockchain and decentralized solutions are transforming the financial landscape, and what does an effective regulatory framework look like. Thursday, Feb. 20, at 12 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: [canadianclubottawa.ca](mailto:canadianclubottawa.ca).

**Webinar: 'A New Chapter for Canada-U.S. Economic Security'**—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a webinar, "A New Chapter for Canada-U.S. Economic Security," featuring Laura Dawson, executive director of the Future Borders Coalition. Thursday, Feb. 20, at 12:30 p.m. happening online: [cdhowe.org](mailto:cdhowe.org).

### FRIDAY, FEB. 21

**'Parliament and the Media'**—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts "Parliament and the Media." The relationship between Parliament and the media is evolving, as parliamentarians leverage social media and other direct communications tools. Friday, Feb. 21, at 9 a.m. ET in Room 425, 180 Wellington St. Details via Eventbrite.

### MONDAY, FEB. 24

**Panel: 'Affordability and Climate: Intertwined Challenges'**—The Institute for Research on Public Policy and the Affordability Action Council host a panel, "Affordability and Climate: Addressing Intertwined Challenges in Politics Today," featuring Tyler Meredith, former economic policy adviser to the Liberal government; Kathleen Monk, former director of communications to then-NDP leader Jack Layton; and Karen Restoule, vice-president of Toronto-based Crestview Strategy and senior fellow at Macdonald-Laurier Institute. Monday, Feb. 24, at 5:30 p.m. at the Delta Hotel Ottawa, 101 Lyon St. N. Details: [irpp.org](mailto:irpp.org).

### WEDNESDAY, FEB. 26

**NDP Leader Singh to Deliver Remarks**—NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh will deliver bilingual remarks at a lunch

event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the DoubleTree by Hilton Montréal, 1255 Jeanne-Mance St. Details: [corim.qc.ca](mailto:corim.qc.ca).

**President of Shell Canada to Deliver Remarks**—Susannah Pierce, outgoing president and country chair of Shell Canada, will take part in a discussion, "Canadian Oil and Gas: How Do We Navigate The Moment?" hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 11:45 a.m. ET. Details: [canadianclub.org](mailto:canadianclub.org).

**Webinar: 'From Carbon Cycle to Carbon Tax'**—The Royal Society of Canada hosts a webinar, "From The Carbon Cycle to the Carbon Tax." A panel of experts will explore our current measurement and monitoring capabilities globally and in urban centres, followed by discussion of how a progressive carbon tax as best positioned to encourage the necessary behaviour to meet our greenhouse gas emissions targets. Wednesday, Feb. 26, at 1 p.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

### THURSDAY, FEB. 27

**Ontario Election**—Ontario voters will head to the polls to cast ballots in the snap provincial election on Thursday, Feb. 27.

**Carbon Removal Canada Conference**—Join Carbon Removal Canada for its conference, "Policy to Progress: Carbon Removal Day," to discuss current solutions in action and how to create the conditions for scaling carbon removal technologies. Thursday, Feb. 27, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, at the National Arts Centre. Details: [carbonremoval.ca/carbon-removal-day](mailto:carbonremoval.ca/carbon-removal-day).

**'Canada's Untapped Power'**—The Canadian Club of Toronto hosts "Canada's Untapped Power: Advancing Gender Equality for a Stronger Future," featuring Mitzie Hunter, president and CEO of the Canadian Women's Foundation; and Tanya van Biesen, president and CEO of VersaFi (formerly WCM). Thursday, Feb. 27, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Details: [canadianclub.org](mailto:canadianclub.org).

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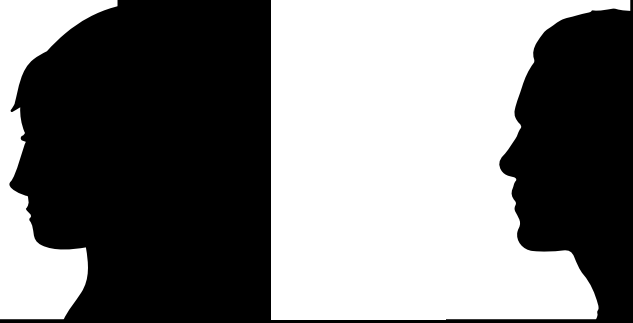


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